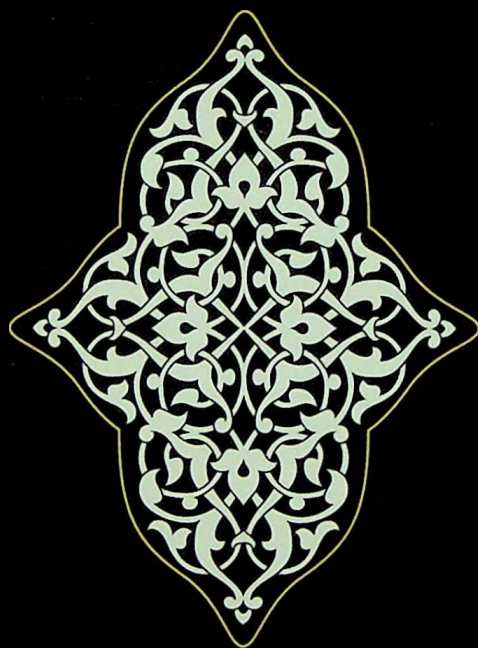


# THREE TREATISES

*Mutual Reminders  
Good Manners  
The Aphorisms*



IMĀM ʿABDALLĀH IBN ʿALAWĪ  
AL-ḤADDĀD

*Translation & Introduction by*  
Dr. Mostafa al-Badawi

IHYA  
PUBLISHING

This volume contains three concise treatises of the venerable Imām al-Haddād. The first treatise, *Mutual Reminding*, distills the ethic and content of offering good counsel to one another. The chief elements of counsel, says the Imām, are *Taqwā*, an active fear and consciousness of God, and detachment from the material world. These elements connect with the topic of the second treatise, *Good Manners*, which discusses the manners recommended of the spiritual wayfarer as he or she takes the path to spiritual felicity. The third treatise, *The Aphorisms*, is a compilation of Imām al-Haddād's wise insights on a broad range of topics and includes the commentary of Shaykh Muḥammad Hayāt al-Sindī.





بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

*In the name of Allāh,  
Most Gracious, Most Merciful.*

*Mutual Reminding*

---

*Good Manners*

---

*The Aphorisms*



THREE TREATISES

*Mutual Reminding*

---

*Good Manners*

---

*The Aphorisms*

IMAM ʿABDALLAH  
IBN ʿALAWI AL-HADDĀD

*Translated by*  
MOSTAFA AL-BADAWI





© 2017/1438 by Mostafa al-Badawi  
Revised Edition February 2017

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, distributed, or transmitted in any form or by any means, including photocopying, recording, or other electronic or mechanical methods, without the prior written permission of the Ihya Publishing the Publisher.

Printed in the United States of America

ISBN 978-1-939256-01-0 (Softcover)  
Library of Congress Control Number 2016957971

*Published by*  
Ihya Publishing  
P.O. Box 426  
Alburtis, PA-18011  
[www.ihyapublishing.com](http://www.ihyapublishing.com)

<i>Author</i>	Imām ‘Abdallāh al-Ḥaddād
<i>Translation &amp; Notes</i>	Mostafa al-Badawi
<i>Editing</i>	Shakir Massoud
<i>Cover Design</i>	Abdul Khafid Mastan
<i>Book design &amp; typography</i>	ARM ( <a href="http://www.whitethreadpress.com">www.whitethreadpress.com</a> )

*Distributed by*  
Muslim Publishers Group  
[www.mpgbooks.com](http://www.mpgbooks.com)  
[info@mpgbooks.com](mailto:info@mpgbooks.com)



## *Contents*

TRANSLATOR'S INTRODUCTION	11
PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION	17

### *Mutual Reminding*

PROLOGUE	21
The Meaning of <i>Taqwā</i>	24
[1] The Recompense of Works	25
[2] God's Satisfaction and His Wrath	27
[3] The Reward of the Pious	27
[4] The Abasement of the Corrupt	29
[5] Delight in Obedience	31
[6] The Four Obstacles to Obedience	32
[7] Ignorance	32
[8] Weakness of Faith	33
[9] Long Hopes	34
[10] Illicit and Suspect Food	36
[11] Sincerity	37
[12] Ostentation	38
[13] Conceit	38
[14] Love of This World	39
CONCLUSION	39
AFTERWORD	51

## *Three Treatises*

### *Good Manners*

PROLOGUE	57
[1] The Beginning of the Path is a Powerful Urge of Divine Origin which should be Strengthened, Protected, and Responded to	59
[2] Repentance, its Conditions, and Protecting Oneself from Sins	60
[3] Guarding the Heart against Insinuations, Ailments, and Ill-Thinking	61
[4] Guarding the Senses against Transgressions and against Being Deceived by this World	63
[5] Remaining in a State of Purity and Preferring Hunger to Satiety	64
[6] Directing One's Whole Attention to God and Devoting	65
[7] Excellence in the Performance of Ritual Prayers; Presence with God is the Essence of all Acts of Worship	66
[8] Caution against Neglecting the Friday Prayer and other Congregational Prayers; Exhortation to Perform the Regular Supererogatory Prayers	66
[9] Exhortation to Persevere in Remembrance and Reflection	67
[10] Obedience and Inclined Towards Disobedience	68
[11] On the States of the Soul and Being Patient	69
[12] Heeding the Example of Provision is Apportioned the People of Fortitude	70
[13] Moving toward God being Compatible with Earning; Divesting Oneself of the Means of Livelihood is not Requisite	71
[14] Patiently Enduring the Harm from Others; Also, Remain Wary of being Tempted by Them	72
[15] Getting Rid of the Need to Obtain Other People's Approval	73

## *Contents*

[16] Rebuking the Seekers of Unveilings and Supernatural Events	73
[17] Seeking Provision and Striving for it	74
[18] Keeping the Company of the Best of People; The Good Manners of the Disciple with His Shaykh; The Attributes of the Perfect Shaykh	75
CONCLUSION	79

## *The Book of Aphorisms* *Kitab al-Hikam*

INTRODUCTION	85
AUTHOR'S PREFACE	87
INTRODUCTION BY SHAYKH MUḤAMMAD ḤAYĀT AL-SINDĪ	89
The Aphorisms	91
COMMENTATOR'S AFTERWORD	151
TRANSLATOR'S APPENDIX 1	153
TRANSLATOR'S APPENDIX 2	157
ENDNOTES	159





## *Translator's Introduction*

In the Name of God, All-Merciful and Compassionate

The Prophet ﷺ said, “*He who believes in God and the Last Day, let him speak words of goodness or else remain silent.*”<sup>1</sup> In another tradition, we learn what is meant by “*words of goodness.*” He ﷺ said, “*The speech of the Son of Adam will be counted against him, not for him, except for enjoining good, forbidding evil, and remembering God.*”<sup>2</sup> When Muslims meet one another, these three should be the subject matter of their discourse. Obviously, they must exchange greetings of peace, inquire about each other’s health, family, and other affairs, for this keeps the bonds of brotherly affection alive. Having done so, they should turn to reminding each other of that which infuses their lives with the fragrance of faith and renders, by God’s will, their life-to-come successful.

As for the learned men and women of the Muslim nation, they are the ones primarily intended by God’s command: **And remind, for reminding profits the believers.**<sup>3</sup> Who is better qualified than these learned and godly people to obey this order and strive to carry it out with substance, wisdom, and in the most befitting manner?

Imām ‘Abdallāh al-Ḥaddād was such a learned man. His was a life infused with the love of his brother Muslims and an unrivaled capacity to remind them of God, His Messenger, and the Last Day. His very presence was a constant reminder to those around him, as well as to those who only heard or read about his counsel on how a Muslim should behave toward his Lord and his brother Muslim.

The first of the three concise books contained in this volume is known as *The Treatise of Mutual Reminding among Loving Brothers, People of Goodness*

and Religion. It was the Imām's first work, dictated in 1069 AH when he was twenty-five years of age. In it he examines mutual reminding and the exchange of good counsel, identifies its chief elements as *tagwā* or fear of God,<sup>01</sup> and detachment from worldly things. He defines *tagwā* according to the criteria of Imām al-Ghazālī and delineates both its active aspect of doing good and its passive aspect of avoiding evil. He then discusses the four things that impair it: ignorance, weakness of faith, long hopes, and illicit and dubious sustenance. He goes on next to discuss two of the major obstacles on the path of obedience, namely conceit and ostentation, both of which seriously assail one's sincerity. Finally, he speaks of how the love of this world severs one from God, quoting numerous Qur'ānic verses, Prophetic traditions, and sayings of the Virtuous Predecessors among the early and venerable Muslim generations.

*Tagwā* and detachment from the world naturally lead to seeking a path to approach the Real, God the Exalted. This path requires courtesy, that is, the good manners of the spiritual wayfarer, which is the subject of the second treatise contained in this volume. It is called *The Treatise on the Good Manners of the Spiritual Disciple's Wayfaring*.<sup>02</sup>

*Good Manners* was dictated by the Imām in 1071 AH, by which time, despite his young age, he was a recognized spiritual master. The treatise was dictated as a reply to a request by one of his early companions for guidelines on how to follow the path.

Manners are important to spiritual growth. It was God Himself who

---

01 *Tagwā* is rendered throughout this book as "the fear of God." The literal meaning of the word is protection. To have *tagwā* is thus to protect oneself. That this protection is from God's wrath and its consequent chastisement is implicit, not explicit. To render it as the "fear of God" is to make explicit what was implicit and leave out part of the meaning. For *tagwā* is not simply fear, since it may arise out of intense love and, therefore, the desire to avoid displeasing the Beloved in any manner, even if no chastisement is involved.

02 We have opted to use "spiritual disciple" for the Arabic word *murīd*. Other options were seeker, aspirant, and traveler or wayfarer. None is fully satisfactory. A *murīd* is he who desires or demands something. *Murīdu'llāh* is one who yearns for God, while *murīdu'l-ākhirah* is one who desires Paradise in the Hereafter. Acting upon these wishes means traveling the Path. A serious seeker of God must become a disciple and receive instruction and training under an authorized master.

taught the Companions how to behave towards their spiritual master, the Prophet ﷺ, with utmost respect and reverence:

O you who believe, do not be forward in the presence of God and His Messenger. And fear God. Indeed, God is hearing, knowing. O you who believe, do not raise your voices above the Prophet's voice, nor shout when speaking to him as you shout one to another, lest your works be rendered void without you knowing it. Those who subdue their voices in the presence of the Messenger of God are those whose hearts God had tested for *taqwā*. For them are forgiveness and a great reward.<sup>4</sup>

*Taqwā* is presented in the preceding passage as the foundation of good manners and proper comportment that is becoming of a person who believes in God, the Messenger ﷺ, and the Hereafter. Before learning about good manners, one ought to give some thought to what are bad manners and their characteristics.

It is bad manners of the most severe degree to be informed that the Hereafter is immensely better than this world and is everlasting, yet still prefer this world and concentrate all one's energy therein. It is bad manners to be informed that it is possible to draw near to God, yet decide that the effort required is too troublesome and settle for the minimum necessary to barely escape the Fire. It is bad manners to be informed that some people ascertain profound knowledge of God through contemplation, yet decide that other things are more important as the objects of your concerns. It is bad manners to devote time and energy to study the insignificant and the ephemeral, yet neglect to devote equal time at least to study that which helps deliver one from chastisement in the Hereafter and from moral indifference in this life. The Prophet ﷺ said, "*God loathes those who are learned in the affairs of this world but ignorant of the Hereafter.*"<sup>5</sup> It behooves those who have been gifted by God with intelligence and skills to apply these gifts toward what benefits them in the most profound way, to gain knowledge and insight about the Real and the purpose for which He created us. This is not to say that one should abandon the world altogether; on the contrary, Islam encourages excellence in things of this world, but not at the expense of matters related to the Hereafter and the religious conduct of one's life. Detachment from the world is a thing of the heart, a mental attitude, an objective view of prioritization, so that one does everything



that is required, but without inordinate preoccupation. As for studying the sciences of religion, it is a duty that no Muslim can evade. "*Seeking knowledge is an obligation upon every Muslim*," said the Prophet ﷺ.<sup>6</sup> This goes side by side with learning a trade, a craft, or obtaining higher university degrees.

As for the good manners of spiritual wayfaring, they are meant to shape one's attitudes and behavior towards God the Creator. Next come good manners with the Prophet ﷺ, his Companions and family; then the Shaykh or spiritual master, other teachers, and other men of God; then with the brothers on the path, other Muslims; and finally with creation at large. There are good manners to be observed with all humanity as well as all the other creatures of the earth.

Learning spiritual courtesy with one's brothers and fellow Muslims lends to one's learning of spiritual courtesy with the Shaykh. This in turn will lead to learning spiritual courtesy with the Prophet ﷺ, which will lead to the ultimate goal of mastering the kind of conduct necessary if one is to be accepted by God ﷻ. However, in practice, all these have to be implemented simultaneously. The hoped-for result appears at each level only when the previous level has been sufficiently mastered.

*The Treatise on the Good Manners of the Spiritual Disciple's Wayfaring* was conceived in such a manner as to be profitable to all wayfarers, given that it is a manual of behavior that is entirely based on the Qur'ān and *Sunna*, the theoretical knowledge of the Imām, and his personal experience. It is a priceless work in that, as mentioned above, it is not addressed to the affiliates of any particular path and is capable of being assimilated with ease and implemented without need for clarifications from a master; and it was written in accordance with the dictates of our time. No Shaykh would disagree with its contents or say that in his particular path they do things differently. On the contrary, all would agree that this pattern of behavior must constitute the common denominator to which all *ṭarīqa*-specific practices may subsequently be added.

Imām al-Ḥaddād once said, "The Path's outward [dimension] is knowledge; its inward is understanding; its yield is a secret; and its ultimate end is to lose oneself in God." This work has to do with the first two of these four.

The English version of this treatise was first published in Britain in the early 1980's in a limited edition. The text has been thoroughly revised for this edition. We have omitted some of the poetry in the first treatise because

of the difficulty of rendering it in to English accurately, while retaining a taste of the original. As with all other translations of the Imām's works, the chapter numeration and titles are ours.

We ask God to forgive the flaws in our work, grant us sincerity in speech and action, and make it easy for us to enjoy the honor of gathering with the Messenger of God ﷺ, his Companions, family, our teachers, and all other men of God in the abode of serenity and eternal light. *Āmin!*





## *Preface*

to the Second Edition

For this new edition, the texts of both treatises were thoroughly revised against the Arabic original. The current printed versions of the works of Imām al-Ḥaddād are to a certain extent more accurate than the earlier ones, having been produced using several manuscripts that had not been available during the publication of the series printed in Egypt in the 1970's. We have added references for Prophetic traditions and a few explanatory notes. Also added is a previously unpublished translation of the Book of Aphorisms of Imām al-Ḥaddād, *Kitāb al-Ḥikam*, together with a commentary by a well-known scholar from Madina, Shaykh Muhammad Ḥayāt al-Sindi.

MOSTAFĀ AL-BADAWĪ



# *Mutual Reminding*

---

THE TREATISE OF MUTUAL REMINDING

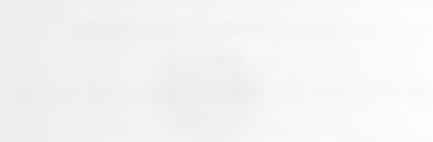
AMONG LOVING BROTHERS,

PEOPLE OF GOODNESS AND RELIGION

IMAM 'ABDALLAH

IBN 'ALAWI AL-HADDĀD

# THE JOURNAL OF THE ROYAL ANTHROPOLOGICAL INSTITUTE



Volume 100, Part 1, 2000



## Prologue

In the Name of God, All-Merciful and Compassionate  
“Transcendent are You! We have no knowledge save that which  
You have taught us; You are the Knowing, the Wise.”<sup>7</sup>

All praise belongs to God, Lord of the Worlds, who created man from clay, then made his progeny from an extraction of mean fluid. He rescued the believers who enjoin truth and patience among one another from among those who are in utter loss, accepting them after attributing failure to all of humanity [who do not believe].<sup>01</sup> He commanded His believing servants to assist each other in benevolence and God-fearing<sup>02</sup>, and informed them that the most honorable of them in His sight are those who fear Him most,<sup>03</sup> that He is the Protector of the God-fearing,<sup>04</sup> and that He created *jinn* and humankind for nothing other than to worship Him<sup>05</sup>—not to make their worldly affairs prosper and to amass wealth. On the contrary, He warned them against all that through His Trustworthy Prophet ﷺ who said, “*It was not revealed to me, ‘Amass money and be a merchant!’ Rather, ‘Extol the praises of your Lord, be of those who prostrate, and worship your Lord until what is certain comes to you!’*”<sup>06</sup>

- 
- 01 By the afternoon! Man, is indeed in loss, except those who believe, do good, counsel each other to truth and counsel each other to patience (Qur’ān, 103:1–3).  
02 Help one another in benevolence and God-fearing and help not one another in sin and transgression, and fear God. (Qur’ān, 5:2).  
03 The most honorable among you in the sight of God are surely those who fear Him most (Qur’ān, 49:13).  
04 But God is the Protector of the God-fearing (Qur’ān, 45: 19).  
05 I have created *jinn* and men solely that they may worship Me. (Qur’ān, 51: 56).  
06 Abū Nu’aym, *Hilyat al-Awliyā’*, 2/131; Aḥmad ibn Hanbal, *Kitāb al-Zuhd*, 2316.



Therefore, the true happiness and perfection of each person lies in conforming to that for which he was created and devoting himself to it by severing himself from anything that can obstruct or divert him from it, whether those be the deviations of deceived fools or the absurdities of the dull and indolent.

May God's blessings be upon our master Muhammad, the Master of all the Messengers and Seal of all the Prophets, whom God sent as a mercy to the worlds, and upon his family, Companions, and those who follow them with excellence until Judgment Day.

Now, to proceed:

That which comprehends all goodness and serves as its foundation is *taqwā*, in private and in public, secretly and openly. *Taqwā* [the fear of God] is the attribute that brings the good of this world and the Next. Because of its importance in religion and its great worth in the eyes of authoritative scholars, they begin their sermons and admonitions by exhorting to *taqwā*, and include it in their counsels. Because it comprehends all good, it suffices as the obligatory counsel that must be included in the Friday Prayer Sermon (*Khuṭba*).<sup>oi</sup> Often, great men of God, when people request a formal counsel from them, confine their counsel to enjoining upon them the fear of God.

*Taqwā* is also the counsel of God, the Lord of the Worlds, to the first and the last [generations] of His servants. God the Exalted says, We have counseled those who were given the Book before you, and you, to fear God.<sup>8</sup> Still exhorting to *taqwā*, God the Exalted says, O people! Fear your Lord who created you of a single soul;<sup>9</sup> And He ﷻ says, O believers! Fear God and speak straight words;<sup>10</sup> And He ﷻ says, O believers! Fear God as He should be feared;<sup>11</sup> And He ﷻ says, So fear God as much as you can,<sup>12</sup> which means doing everything possible in this respect, for God does not charge a soul with more than what He has given it.<sup>13</sup> There are many more such verses enjoining the fear of God.

The good of both this world and the Next was promised by God to those who fear Him. Examples of this are:

---

The entire verse runs as follows: So, extol the praises of your Lord and be of those who prostrate, and worship your Lord until what is certain comes to you (Qur'an, 15:98-99).

- oi One of the necessary conditions of the Friday Sermon or *Khuṭba* is to counsel the audience, and it is sufficient counsel to exhort them to fear God.

Relief from hardship and bestowal of provision from whence one does not expect: God the Exalted says, *He who fears God, He will make a way out for him and provide him from where he does not expect.*<sup>14</sup>

Right guidance: God the Exalted says, *This is the Book, no doubt, containing right guidance for the God-fearing.*<sup>15</sup>

Knowledge: God the Exalted says, *Fear God and God will teach you.*<sup>16</sup>

Discernment, expiation of bad actions, and forgiveness of sins: God—Transcendent and High is He—says, *If you fear God, He will give you discernment, expiate your bad actions, and forgive you.*<sup>17</sup> Certain commentators have stated that ‘*discernment*’ is guidance in the heart to discriminate between truth and falsehood.

Protection: God the Exalted says, *God is the Protector of the God-fearing.*<sup>18</sup>

Being with God: God the Exalted says, *Know that God is with the God-fearing.*<sup>19</sup> This means that God is with them with His support, succor, and protection.

Salvation and deliverance: God the Exalted says, *Then We shall deliver those who are God-fearing.*<sup>20</sup>

The promise of Paradise: God says—and August is the Speaker—The likeness of the Garden that the God-fearing are promised;<sup>21</sup> and, *For the God-fearing, with their Lord, are gardens of bliss;*<sup>22</sup> and, *The Garden shall be brought near for the God-fearing, not distant.*<sup>23</sup>

There are other beautiful and good things, immense favors and generous gifts promised to the God-fearing. It is sufficient honor for *taqwā* that God the Exalted mentions it more than ninety times in His Book. As for enjoining *taqwā* and its merits, the Messenger of God ﷺ said, “*Fear God wherever you are; follow a bad deed with a good one and it shall erase it; and behave toward people in a gracious manner,*”<sup>24</sup> he ﷺ also said “*I enjoin upon you the fear of God and to hear and obey, even if there is placed over you an African slave for a ruler,*”<sup>25</sup> he ﷺ also said “*Protect yourselves from the Fire, even with half a date; If you lack even that, then with a gracious word.*”<sup>26</sup> And he ﷺ said in his prayers, “*O God, I ask of You guidance, God-fearing, restraint, and freedom from needs!*”<sup>27</sup> The Prophet ﷺ declared that “*there was no superiority for a*

white man over a black man, nor for an Arab over a non-Arab, except the fear of God,"<sup>18</sup> "for you are all from Adam and Adam is from dust!"<sup>19</sup> When asked who the most honorable of people were, he replied that "they were those who fear God most."<sup>20</sup> It has been said that he ﷺ had told them to "Eat only the food of those who fear God and let only those who fear God eat their food."<sup>21</sup>

Ā'isha رضي الله عنها said, "Nothing of this world pleased the Messenger of God, nor any person truly pleased him, except that or those which involved Fear of God."<sup>22</sup>

Ā'li—may God honor his countenance—said, "The crops of a people never perish in the presence of the fear of God."

Qatāda said, "It is written in the Torah: 'Fear God, then die wherever you wish!'" Al-A'mash said, "He whose capital is the fear of God, tongues grow weary describing his profits." Bishr al-Hāfi used to recite:

*Death for the God-fearing is endless life  
Some have died but are still among the living.*

The merits of *taqwā* and the God-fearing are beyond enumeration. Imām al-Ghazālī has composed quite a lengthy exposition of this in his treatise *Minhāj al-Ābidīn*, and what we have just quoted is extracted from it.

#### THE MEANING OF TAQWĀ

Imām al-Ghazālī says, "*Taqwā* in the Qur'ān has three meanings. The first is *fear* and a sense of *awe*. The second includes obedience and worship. The third is freeing the heart from sins, which is the reality and essence of *taqwā*."

In summary, *taqwā* is to guard oneself against the anger of God and His punishment by fulfilling His commandments and abstaining from what He prohibits and warns against. The reality of *taqwā* is that your Lord never see you in places where He has forbidden you to be, nor ever miss you in the places He has commanded you to be.<sup>23</sup>

01 The ḥadīth in the sources runs as follows, keep no company save that of a believer and let only those who fear God eat your food. Tirmidhī, Sunan, 2395.

02 *Taqwā*, when sincere, leads to excellence in obedience. Excellence was defined by the Prophet ﷺ as: to worship God as if you see Him, for if you see Him not, He sees you. [Bukhārī, Saḥīḥ, 50] God wishes to see His servants engaged in doing



## [I] THE RECOMPENSE OF WORKS

Those possessed of sound hearts and upright minds know that they will be requited for what they do, reap what they sow, be judged just as they judge others, and that they are heading toward that which they have forwarded for themselves. How can they not know this or fail to be certain of it when they hear that which they believe and accept in the perfect revelation of God and the utterances of His Prophet ﷺ imparting conviction and certitude to those whose hearts God illuminates and whose breasts He dilates. Be present of heart and attentive of ear, and listen to what may awaken you from your heedlessness and rouse you from your slumber. You will then act appropriately for your own good and save yourself “on a day when no wealth shall avail, nor children, save those who come to God with a sound heart”.<sup>32</sup>

God the Exalted says, To God belongs what is in the heavens and what is in the earth, that He may recompense those who have done wrong with their doings and recompense those who have done good with good.<sup>33</sup> He ﷺ also says, And there is nothing for man except what he has striven for, and his strivings shall surely be seen; then he will be recompensed for it to the full, and to your Lord is the final end.<sup>34</sup> And He ﷺ says It is not by your wishes, nor the wishes of the People of the Book. He who does wrong will be recompensed accordingly, and he will find neither protector nor ally other than God. And he who does good, whether he be male or female, and he is a believer, such will enter the Garden, and they will not be wronged [so much as] the thread of a date-stone.<sup>35</sup> And He ﷺ says He who does an

---

what pleases Him and avoiding what displeases Him. God is entirely aware of His servants' states, both inwardly and outwardly, but His gaze falls upon them according to these states: it can be a gaze of mercy and solicitude, or one of displeasure leading to punishment.

atom's weight of good will see it, and he who does an atom's weight of evil will see it.<sup>36</sup> And He ﷻ says, God charges no soul except that which it can bear. It will be requited for whatever good and whatever evil it has earned.<sup>37</sup> And He ﷻ says He who does good, it is for his own self, and he who does wrong it is against it; and your Lord is not unjust to His servants.<sup>38</sup> And He ﷻ says [*Judgment Day shall be*] a day when each soul will find the good it has done brought near; as for the evil it has done, it will wish that there would be a mighty distance between them. God warns you to beware of Him, and God is kind to the servants.<sup>39</sup> And He ﷻ says Fear a day when you shall be returned to God, then each soul shall be recompensed for what it has earned, and they shall not be wronged.<sup>40</sup> It is said that this verse was the last verse of the Qur'an to be revealed.

The Messenger of God ﷺ said, "*The Holy Spirit whispered into my heart: Live as long as you wish, you shall die! Love whatever you wish, you shall be separated from it! Do whatever you wish, you shall be rewarded for it!*"<sup>41</sup> And he ﷺ said "*Benevolence does not decay, sins are not forgotten, the Judge does not die. As you judge, so shall you be judged.*"<sup>42</sup> And he related on behalf of his Lord, "*O My servants, it is but your deeds that I count for you, then I shall pay you in full for them. He who then finds good, let him thank God; and he who finds otherwise, let him blame none but himself.*"<sup>43</sup> And he ﷺ said "*Do not insult the dead, for they have gone to that which they have forwarded [for themselves].*"<sup>44</sup> And he ﷺ said "*A slave may be raised to a higher rank in the Garden than his master. The master will say, 'O Lord! This man was my slave in the world!' He will say, Transcendent is He, 'I have merely rewarded him for his deeds.'*"<sup>45</sup>

'Ali ﷺ said, "This world is the abode of works; there are no rewards in it. The Hereafter is the abode of rewards; there are no works in it. So, act in the abode of no rewards for the sake of the abode of no works!"

Al-Hasan al-Basri ﷺ said, "God will say to the people of the Garden, 'Enter the Garden through My mercy, dwell therein perpetually by your good intentions, and take your shares of it by your works!'"

All the aforementioned quotes that indicate the occurrence of recompense are provided here as a reminder; otherwise they are well known to common believers and the elite alike. They are so well known that even the most simple minded of believers are privy to them.

## [2] GOD'S SATISFACTION AND HIS WRATH

It was God's will to associate His good pleasure with obedience to Him, and His wrath with disobedience. He promised those who obey Him admittance to the Garden by His mercy and those who disobey Him to be cast into the Fire according to His justice and wisdom. God the Exalted says:

These are the bounds [set by] God. He who obeys God and His Messenger, He will admit him to gardens beneath which rivers flow, abiding therein forever. That is the immense triumph. And he who disobeys God and His Messenger, and transgresses His bounds, He will admit him into a fire, abiding therein forever, and his will be a humiliating torment.<sup>46</sup>

He has commanded His believing servants to hasten to His forgiveness and His Garden, and to protect themselves and their families from the Fire, by conforming to His commands and avoiding disobedience. God ﷻ says, Hasten to forgiveness from your Lord and a garden the breadth of which is the heavens and earth, prepared for the God-fearing.<sup>47</sup> God the Exalted also says, O you who believe, protect yourselves and your families from a fire, the fuel of which is people and stones. Upon it are angels, severe and powerful, who do not disobey God in what He commands them and do as they are commanded!<sup>48</sup>

## [3] THE REWARD OF THE PIOUS

God the Exalted says, He who does good, whether he be male or female, and is a believer, We shall cause him to live a good life.<sup>49</sup> And He says—Transcendent is He—God has promised those of you who believe and do good works that He shall cause them to rule in the land, as He caused those before them to rule, that He shall establish firmly for them their religion, which He has chosen for them, and that He shall change their fear into security.<sup>50</sup> And He says—Exalted is He—Those who believe and do good works, We shall not waste the reward of those who do excellent works. They shall have Gardens of Eden, beneath which rivers flow. Therein they shall be adorned with bracelets of gold, wearing green clothes of silk and brocade, reclining therein upon couches. How fair the reward and how excellent the resting place!<sup>51</sup> And He says—Exalted is He—Those who believe and do

good works, the All Merciful shall give them affection.<sup>51</sup> Ibn 'Abbās — may God be pleased with him — said about this last passage, "He will love them and cause the believers also to love them."

The Messenger of God ﷺ said, "*God the Exalted says, 'He who shows hostility to a wali<sup>o1</sup> of Mine, on him I declare war! My servant draws nearer to Me with nothing I love more than that which I have made incumbent upon him. And My servant ceases not to draw nearer to me with supererogatory devotions until I love him. Once I love him, I become his hearing with which he hears, his eyesight with which he sees, his hand with which he grasps, and his foot on which he walks. Should he ask of Me, I shall give him, and should he seek My protection, I shall protect him.'*"<sup>52</sup>

Therefore, he who does what is obligatory upon him, then adds supererogatory acts of devotion in abundance in order to draw nearer to God, God honors him with this great love that renders his every movement by God and for God.

He ﷺ also related on behalf of his Lord, "*When My servant draws nearer to Me by a hand span, I draw nearer to him by a cubit. When he draws nearer to Me a cubit, I draw nearer to him an arm span. When he comes to Me walking, I come to him running.*"<sup>54</sup>

The servant draws nearer to his Lord by obeying and serving Him. The Lord draws nearer to His servant by His favor and mercy.

He ﷺ also related on behalf of his Lord, "*I have prepared for My virtuous servants that which no eye has seen, no ear heard, and no human heart ever imagined.*"<sup>55</sup>

In the Psalms, it is said, "O Son of Adam! Obey Me and I shall fill your heart with independence, your two hands with provision, and your body with health."

And God said to the world, "O world! He who serves Me, serve him, but he who serves you, make him your servant!"

o1 The literal meaning of *wali* is ally or both protector and protégé. The term has a general meaning based upon the verse, God is the Protector of the believers; He brings them out from the shadows into the light (Qur'an, 2:257). In this sense, every believer is a *wali* of God. However, those who make God their sole ally and strive sincerely to please Him become His protégés in a much more intense and specific way that is indicated in the ḥadith. Thus, when one speaks of a *wali*, one usually means a beloved one of God, a person who has become the object of special Divine solicitude and grace.

Bishr ibn al-Hārith — may God's mercy be upon him — said, "People of goodness have taken possession of both this world and the Next."

And Yaḥyā ibn Mu'ādh has said, "The children of this world are served by slaves, but the children of the Hereafter are served by the free."

O my brother, if you wish to have a rank that does not wither, eminence that does not dwindle, honor that is permanent, and glory that is perpetual, then obey your Lord! For God, has placed all these in His obedience and graciously bestows them on those of His servants who obey Him. He has already honored the servants who have obeyed Him by freeing them from servitude to their whims and appetites, purifying their hearts from the impurity of attending to ephemeral things; brought by their hands supernatural events and wondrous miracles, such as knowledge of the unseen, attracting an abundance of *baraka*, and having their prayers answered. Thereafter, people took of their lights, followed in their footsteps, implored God to relieve their hardships for their sake, requested Him by their rank with Him to protect them from harm, and sought cures in the *baraka* of their footprints and the dust of their tombs. But God has given them even more than that; He cast some of His light into their hearts, filled them with the purest of His knowledge and love, comforted them in their retreats with the Remembrance of Him, so that they felt estranged from His creation, prepared for them permanent bliss in the Garden of Bliss, and promised them the vision of His Noble Countenance. Greater still shall be His satisfaction with them.

That is the great triumph!<sup>56</sup> For the likes of this let workers work!<sup>57</sup>

#### [4] THE ABASEMENT OF THE CORRUPT

God the Exalted says, He who comes to his Lord as a criminal, his shall be Hell, in which he will neither die nor live.<sup>58</sup> And He says — Exalted is He — Or do those who commit sins think they will outstrip Us? Evil is their judgment.<sup>59</sup> The meaning of "outstrip" here is to evade and stand out of reach. And God the Exalted says, He who disobeys God and His Messenger, he has strayed into manifest error.<sup>60</sup> The Messenger of God ﷺ said, "*He who commits adultery is not a believer while he commits adultery, and he who steals is not a believer while he steals, and he who drinks alcohol is not a believer while he drinks.*"<sup>61</sup> And he ﷺ said "*When the servant sins, it becomes*



a black spot in his heart. Should he repent, his heart becomes clear again. But if he repeats it, the black spot grows until his heart turns black." This is His saying, Exalted is He, No, but what they have wrought has covered over their hearts.<sup>62</sup> He ﷺ said, "hardness of the heart comes from frequent sins." He ﷺ said moreover "The servant's provision may be withheld because of a sin he committed."<sup>63</sup>

And God revealed to Moses ﷺ O Moses! The first of my creation to die was Satan, for he was the first to disobey Me, and he who disobeys Me I consider him dead."

Sa'id ibn al-Musayyab ؓ said, "People honor themselves with nothing like obedience to God; nor do they debase themselves with anything like disobedience to God. It is sufficient support from God to the believer for him to see his enemy disobeying God."

Muḥammad ibn Wāsi' said, "Sins in succession slay the heart."

One of the Virtuous Predecessors has said, "If you disobey God, knowing that He sees you, you are scorning God's vision, but if you disobey Him, thinking that He does not see you, you are a disbeliever."

Wuhayb ibn al-Ward ؓ was asked, "Does he who disobeys God find pleasure in worship?" He answered, "No! Neither does he who [merely] intends disobedience."

The Virtuous Predecessors used to say, "Sins are the harbinger of disbelief."

In summary, continually indulging in sin is a sign of having fallen in the sight of God and be deserving of His displeasure. He who persists in this is detestable to the All-Merciful; he is the Devil's ally and the believers' object of disgust.<sup>64</sup> So beware, my brother, of exposing yourself to God's displeasure and chastisement by disobeying Him. Should your soul incite

---

61 It is in the believer's nature to love that which God loves and to detest that which God detests. Thus, the believer will detest ugliness and chaos, which in the context of human behavior is willful disobedience to God, leading to all kinds of evil and sin. But a believer detests only evil thoughts, feelings, and deeds—never a human being as such, or for that matter any other created being. Human beings belong to their Creator; they are attributed to Him. He treats them with mercy, providing for them generously, even as they disobey and rebel against Him. The believer must of necessity model his feelings and behavior on his Lord's. He may thus disapprove of someone's behavior, but this should never prevent him from treating him with gentleness and courtesy, helping him when in need, counseling him whenever appropriate, and imploring God to guide him to the straight path.

you to sin, remind it of God's awareness and sight of you. Place fear into it by recalling God's warnings of the painful torment and formidable punishment that awaits those who disobey Him. Had it been that the punishment for committing sins was merely being debarred from reaching the rank of the Foremost (*al-sābiqūn*) or being deprived of the reward of those most excellent in deeds (*al-muḥsinīn*), this alone would have been sufficient [deterrence]. What, then, when indulgence in sin leads to shame, Hellfire, and the wrath and displeasure of the Compeller, before which the heavens and earth cannot stand? We ask God for safety, by His grace.

### [5] DELIGHT IN OBEDIENCE

The Messenger of God ﷺ said, "*He who is pleased by his good deeds and displeased by his evil ones is a believer.*"<sup>64</sup>

O believer, when God grants you the good fortune of acting in His obedience, let your joy be great; thank God in abundance for honoring you to serve Him and choosing you to attend to Him, and ask Him to accept, by His grace, whatever He has made easy for you in the way of virtuous behavior. 'Alī عليه السلام said, "Be more anxious for your works to be accepted than for them to be merely completed, for no accepted deed is insignificant."<sup>65</sup>

Always acknowledge your shortcomings in fulfilling your duties to your Lord, even when you are most determined and energetic in His obedience, for His rights upon you are immense: He created you from nothing; His favors flow upon you in abundance; He treats you with grace and generosity; you obey Him only by His power and His ability; and you worship Him only by His help and mercy.

Beware of soiling the robe of your faith and blackening the face of your heart by committing that which your Lord has forbidden you. Should you fall into sin, even if it is infrequent, hasten to repent, return to obedience, feel remorse and ask forgiveness in abundance. Remain fearful and apprehensive, for the believer remains fearful and apprehensive to the extreme

---

or The meaning of Imām 'Alī's words seems to be that one should perform what one is currently doing to perfection, allowing ample time for it, rather than being in a hurry to get it over with and move on to the next task, thus missing achieving *iḥsān* or excellence and substituting quantity for quality.

even when sincere in his obedience and excellent in his service. You know how fearful and wary the Prophets were, even though infallible, and the saints, even though [enjoying God's protection], such that their works were good and their sins rare or non-existent. You are more worthy of this than they, for they were better acquainted than you with the immensity of God's mercy, held a better opinion of God than you, were more truthful than you in hoping for His pardon, and more hopeful than you in His generosity and grace. Follow in their footsteps and you will be safe and secure. Follow their path and you will succeed and profit. Seek protection in God, for he who seeks protection in God has been guided to a straight path.

## [6] THE FOUR OBSTACLES TO OBEDIENCE

Because the abode of this world is founded upon hardship and trial, kneaded with trouble and distress, and filled with preoccupations and distractions, the things that divert one away from acts of obedience abound, as do those things that incite to transgression. These distractions and incitements are numerous, but may be reduced to four categories: The first is *ignorance*, the second *weakness of faith*, the third *long hopes*, and the fourth *eating illicit or dubious food*.<sup>o1</sup> We shall briefly discuss each of these four, God willing, to demonstrate how blameworthy they truly are and to show how to guard oneself and free oneself from them. Success is from God.

## [7] IGNORANCE

As for ignorance, it is the origin of all evil and root of every harm. Ignorant people are one thing indicated by the Prophet's ﷺ saying "*This world is accursed, and accursed is what is in it, except the Remembrance of God, the learned and those learning*."<sup>65</sup> It has been said that when God created ignorance He said to it, "Come!", but it moved away. He said to it, "Go!" but it came. Then He said, "By My might, I have created nothing in creation more hateful to Me than you, and I shall place you amongst the worst of

---

<sup>o1</sup> Illicit or suspect food includes food bought with illicit or suspect money. The broader meaning of eating illicit food thus includes earning illicit money.

my creation!"<sup>66</sup> 'Alī ؑ said, "There is no enemy worse than ignorance. A man is the enemy of that which he has no knowledge of."

Ignorance is blameworthy according to both textual and rational proof, and this can hardly be concealed to anyone. The ignorant person succumbs to neglecting obligations and committing sins, whether he wishes it or not, because he neither knows the obligations God has enjoined upon him nor the misdeeds God has forbidden. He can leave the shadows of ignorance only by the light of knowledge.

How excellent are the words of Shaykh 'Alī ibn Abī Bakr when he said,

*Ignorance is a fire that burns a man's religion  
and knowledge the water that extinguishes it.*

So you must learn what God has made incumbent for you to learn. You are not obliged to acquire extensive knowledge, but rather that knowledge of the beliefs without which your faith remains unsound. You are also required to learn the proper performance of your obligatory acts of obedience and how to avoid what is prohibited. This is an immediate duty with regard to immediate obligations and a deferred duty for those matters that may be deferred.

Malik ibn Dīnār ؑ used to say, "He who seeks knowledge for himself, a little will suffice him; but he who seeks knowledge for the people, the people's needs are numerous."

## [8] WEAKNESS OF FAITH

Weakness of faith is an abominable affliction and a blameworthy attribute from which many blameworthy things arise, such as neglecting to act on one's knowledge, disregarding the enjoining of good and forbidding of evil, harboring hopes for forgiveness without striving for it, worrying about provision, fearing people, and other undesirable character traits. A person's observance of God's commands and prohibitions is proportionate to the strength of his faith. The most obvious proof of a person's weakness in faith is his neglect of injunctions and commitment to contraventions. Therefore, every believer should strive to strengthen his faith, and there are three ways to do so:

The first is to listen mindfully to the verses of the Qur'ān and Prophetic traditions that mention the promises of reward, threats of punishment, tidings of the Hereafter, stories of the Prophets—what miracles they were confirmed with and what happened to their opponents—the detachment from the world and yearning for the Hereafter which the Virtuous Predecessors possessed, and other things handed down.

The second is to observe the Kingdom of the heavens and the earth, the wondrous signs and beautiful creatures they contain, with an eye receptive to the signs and teachings inherent within them.

The third is to persevere in acts of goodness and guard oneself from falling into sin and contravention, for faith is both words and deeds, and as such increases with obedience and diminishes with sins.

All these that we have mentioned increase faith and strengthen certitude. And God is the Helper.

## [9] LONG HOPES

Long hopes are extremely blameworthy for they are the main impetus leading one to work for his prosperity in this worldly life at the expense of ruining his Hereafter. The Messenger of God ﷺ said, "*The first among this nation will be saved by detachment from this world and certainty, while the last will perish by greed and [vain] hopes.*"<sup>67</sup> And he ﷺ said "*Four things are [harbingers of] wretchedness [in the Hereafter]: dry eyes, hardness of the heart, greed, and long hopes.*"<sup>68</sup> Among his ﷺ prayers is, "*I seek Your protection from every hope that may distract me!*"<sup>69</sup>

ʿAlī رضي الله عنه said, "What I fear most for you is that you follow your passions and hold out long hopes. Following passions hinders one from the truth; as for long hopes, they cause one to forget the Hereafter."

It is a maxim that he whose hopes are long; his works are bad. The long hope is to feel secure that you will remain in this world for a very long time. It is a sign of excessive foolishness and extreme stupidity, for it dissipates certitude and attaches one to illusion. If you say to such a person in the evening, "Are you certain you will live until morning?" or in the morning, "Are you certain you will live until evening?" he will answer, "No!" Still, he works for this world as if he is never to die, to the point

that should he be told that he will remain in this world forever, he will be incapable of adding any further desire and greed for it. What can be more foolish than that?

Furthermore, long hopes are at the root of a number of evil character traits and acts which hinder obedience and invite sin. Such are avidity, avarice, and the fear of poverty. Among the worst is finding comfort in this world, and striving to fructify it and amass its debris,<sup>o1</sup> when he has said—may blessings and peace be upon him—that he was sent for the ruin of this world, and that he who makes it prosper is not of him.<sup>o2</sup>

Long hopes bring about procrastination, which is a most sterile thing that never begets anything good. It is said that most of the woeful howling of the people of the Fire is due to procrastination. For he who procrastinates is ever lazy in obedience and slow in repentance, until death overtakes him, at which time he will say: “O Lord! Were You to only relieve me for a short time, that I may give charity and be one of the righteous.”<sup>70</sup> But it will be said to him: “God will not delay a soul whose time has come,<sup>71</sup> Did We not give you lives long enough that he who reflects may indeed reflect, and the Warner came to you? So taste! For the unjust have no helper.”<sup>72</sup> He will thus leave this world with endless sorrow and limitless regret.

So shorten your hopes, O my brother, and let [what remains of] your time stand before your eyes and your long hope behind your back. Seek help in achieving this by remembering the “Defeater of Pleasures” in abundance,

o1 Things of this world are called “debris” because they are invariably imperfect, have noxious side effects, and are evanescent, shortly to be discarded, either because of boredom or decay.

o2 The first half of this utterance is found in a rare manuscript entitled: *Al-Arbaʿūn Hadithan fī Haqq al-Fuqarāʾ Ahl al-Suffa* compiled by a sixth century AH scholar, while the second is nowhere to be found in the sources in my possession. However, it should be made clear that the ruin in question in all such utterances is the ruin of the love of the world in the heart of Muslims, the ruin of that attachment, for that leads to working for it at the expense of working for one's life-to-come. It means that whatever is done for the world has to be done with detachment and appropriate frugality. It does not mean letting one's worldly affairs go to ruin, nor attending to them with less than utmost efficacy. Were it not so, there would have been no Islamic civilization, for this civilization was created by men who feared God and were quite incapable of acting in a manner that ran contrary to the instructions of the Qurʾān and the Prophet ﷺ.

the "Disperser of Companies."<sup>01</sup> Reflect on those relatives and acquaintances who have passed before you. Bring to mind just how near death is, for it is the nearest thing to you, invisibly lying in wait. Be ready for it; expect its pouncing upon you at any time.

The Messenger of God ﷺ used to say, "*By He in whose Hand is my soul, I never raised my eyes thinking I would lower them before my soul is taken, nor have I ever eaten a morsel thinking that I would swallow it without choking on it because of death.*"<sup>02</sup> Sometimes he rubbed the wall for *tayammum*, and, when it was said to him, "*Water is near,*" he replied, "*I do not know but that I may never reach It.*"<sup>03</sup>

Al-Siddiq, may God be pleased with him, used to recite,

*Every man wakes up in his home  
death nearer to him than his sandal laces.*

The Proof of Islam ﷺ wrote, "Know that death does not pounce at a specific time, situation, or age, but it is certain to pounce. Therefore, preparing for it has priority over preparing for this world."

## [10] ILLICIT AND SUSPECT FOOD

Consuming illicit and doubtful food inevitably hinders obedience and invites to transgression. The Messenger of God ﷺ is reported to have said that he who eats *ḥalāl* his limbs obey, whether he wishes it or not, but he who eats *ḥarām* his limbs sin, whether he wishes it or not.<sup>02</sup> And it has been said, "Eat what you will, for that is how you will act." And a certain Knower<sup>03</sup> once said, "People are severed from the truth and excluded from the circle of sainthood only because they do not scrutinize what they eat."

He whose food is illicit or suspect, even when he acts in obedience, his

---

<sup>01</sup> These are metaphors which refer to death.

<sup>02</sup> Imām al-Ghazālī quotes this in *Iḥyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn* (2/91) as having been said by the famous Sufi Sahl al-Tustarī.

<sup>03</sup> A Knower by God, 'Arif bi'l-llāh, sometimes rendered in English as "Gnostic", is one who perceives by God not by his own limited faculties, as indicated in the famous *Hadith Qudsi* where God declares that when He comes to love someone He becomes his vision and hearing. Such a person sees and hears by God's power and

acts are unacceptable to God, for God the Exalted says, “God only accepts from those who fear Him,”<sup>75</sup> and God is good and accepts only what is good.<sup>76</sup>

Therefore, O my brother, refrain from eating the illicit, for this is obligatory, and from the suspect, out of scrupulousness; and seek the licit, for this is an obligation among the other obligations. Then, when you obtain licit food and clothes, eat with moderation and dress with moderation. Do not be excessive, for the licit does not bear overindulgence. Beware of eating to satiety, for eating licit food to satiety is the beginning of evil; what then of doing so with the illicit? He عليه السلام has said, “*The Son of Adam never fills a vessel worse than his stomach. It should suffice the Son of Adam only a few morsels to keep his back straight. But if he must, then a third [of his stomach] for his food, a third for his beverage, and a third for his breath.*”<sup>77</sup>

## [II] SINCERITY

God the Exalted says, “I created Jinn and mankind only that they may worship Me.”<sup>78</sup> And, “O My servants who believe, My earth is vast. It is I whom you should worship.”<sup>79</sup>

O believer—may God grant you success—you must free yourself for the worship of your Lord by removing all hindrances and avoiding all diversions and obstacles. Know that worship cannot be sound without knowledge, and knowledge and works cannot be of benefit without sincerity, for it is the axis around which everything revolves, and the foundation upon which everything stands. As Abū al-Qāsim al-Qushayrī رحمته الله said, “Sincerity is to have no other intention than the Real in your acts of obedience. This means that you should intend, with your acts of obedience, to draw nearer to God and nothing else—neither ostentation before a created being, nor wish to be praised among people, nor for them to owe you a favor—nothing other than drawing nearer to God.” He said, “It would be true to say that sincerity is ‘to purify one’s actions from consideration of the regard of created beings.’ This is the essence of this chapter.

---

is thus able to perceive immensely more than the average person, including other people’s thoughts and feelings.



[12] OSTENTATION

Beware of ostentation,<sup>01</sup> for it invalidates your works, leads to the loss of reward, and brings on detestation and punishment. The Messenger of God ﷺ called it the "lesser idolatry."<sup>02</sup> There is an authentic tradition to the effect that the first of God's creation to fuel the Fire will be three: A man who recites the Qur'ān just so that it is said, "He is a reciter"; a man who is killed, having fought only so it is said, "He is courageous"; and a wealthy man who gives charity only so it is said, "He is generous."<sup>03</sup>

Ostentation is to seek importance in people's eyes with acts normally meant to draw one nearer to God, such as Ritual Prayers and Fasts. Should you perceive ostentation in yourself, do not try to rid yourself of it by abandoning such works, thus pleasing the Devil. Works that can only be done in public, such as Pilgrimage, *jihād*, acquiring knowledge, congregational Prayers, and similar things, you should perform publicly as God has commanded you. Strive against your ego and seek God's help! As for other kinds of works like fasting, night vigils, charity, and recitation, these you should go to extremes to conceal, for performing them in secret is unreservedly preferable, except for those who are safe from ostentation, who hope to be emulated by others, and who are qualified for this.

[13] CONCEIT

Beware of conceit, for it invalidates works. The Messenger of God ﷺ said, "*Conceit eats good works just as fire eats firewood.*"<sup>80</sup> He ﷺ also said "*Three things are ruinous: avarice that one obeys, passion that one follows, and self-admiration.*"<sup>81</sup> Conceit is for someone to see himself as important and his behavior as excellent. From this arises showing off one's knowledge, feeling superior to others, and being self-satisfied. As Ibn 'Aṭā'illāh ؒ said, "The

01 *Riyā'*, rendered here as ostentation, is to act to be seen by others.

02 Idolatry is shirk, that is, to associate other than God with Him in worship. This is the "greater idolatry." The "lesser idolatry" is to worship Him with something other than Him as part of your intention.

03 The *ḥadīth* is here abridged and paraphrased. The full version is in Nasā'ī, Sunan, 3137.

root of every sin, distraction, or lust is self-satisfaction." He who is satisfied with himself is blind to his shortcomings; and he who is unaware of his shortcomings, how can he succeed?

*The eye of approval falls short of every blemish  
Just as the eye of reproof reveals every defect.*

## [14] LOVE OF THIS WORLD

The Messenger of God ﷺ said, "*The love of this world leads to every sin.*"<sup>82</sup> It is at the root of every affliction, the origin of every calamity, the essence of every temptation, and the source of every hardship. Its evil has spread in these times and has become a grave danger, involving everyone. It is exhibited shamelessly as if it were not disgraceful and reprehensible. It has taken over the hearts of people and resulted in their excessive eagerness to work for the world and accumulate its debris. They roam about with their nets, fishing for suspect and illegal wares, as if God had made affluence in this world an obligation, the same as Prayer and Fasting.

For this reason, religion is losing its landmarks, the lights of certitude are being extinguished, the tongues of the reminders are silent, the paths of guidance have disappeared, and the paths of ruin are increasingly trod. By God! This is the blind and deaf trial, dark and black, wherein no prayer is answered and no caller heard. The master of all Prophets ﷺ spoke truly when he said, "*Each community has its temptation, and that of my community is money.*"<sup>83</sup> And, "*Each community has its calf, the calf of my community is the Dīnār and the dirham.*"<sup>84</sup> In other words each community has something particular to which it inordinately attends to that leads to neglecting the worship of God, just as the Israelites attended to the worship of the [golden] Calf, abandoning the worship of God ﷻ. And God knows best.

## CONCLUSION

It is good to conclude this brief exposition with a few quotations revealing the demerits of this world and of he who makes it his priority. But we must

precede this with a rule that can be acted upon and referred back to, and so we say, (and success is from God):

The world<sup>o1</sup> is of three levels: one leading to reward; another leading to being called to account; and a third leading to punishment.

As for that leading to reward, it is the one that becomes the means for you to attain good and escape evil. It is the riding mount of the believer and the tilling ground of the Hereafter; and will consist of the bare necessities, lawfully acquired.

As for that which leads to being called to account, it is that which neither prevents you from an obligation, nor induces you to transgression in seeking it. This is the kind of worldly situation that leads to a protracted reckoning [in the Hereafter]. It is that of the rich whom the poor will precede into the Garden by half a day, which is five hundred years.

As for that which leads to punishment, it is that which prevents you from your obligations or lures you into transgression. For its owner, this life is provision for the Fire and his path to the abode of ruin. This is what is meant by the statement, "God orders the world to be cast into the Fire. It cries, 'O Lord! My supporters and my followers!' Then He says—Transcendent is He—'Let its supporters and followers join it!' Then they are indeed made to join it."

Now know that the pursuers of this world are of three kinds:

Some pursue it with the intention of giving to relatives and comforting the poor. Such people are considered generous and will be rewarded if their acts match their intentions. However, they lack wisdom, for the wise do not seek that the consequences of which they do not really know. Let them heed the lesson in the story of Tha'laba, to whom God the Exalted alludes in the verse: "Among them are those who promised God, Should He give us of His favor we shall surely give charity."<sup>o2</sup>

---

o1 What is meant here is one's worldly situation as a whole, including one's social position, family, and possessions.

o2 Qur'an, 9:75. Tha'laba was a hypocrite who lived in the time of the Prophet ﷺ. In those days, a hypocrite was one who professed to be a Muslim, yet harbored disbelief in his heart. Tha'laba once asked the Prophet ﷺ for a large number of sheep, promising to pay his obligatory *Zakāt* and give of them in charitable ways. His flock prospered and increased so much that he had to take them away from town to a valley that could accommodate them. When the time came for him to pay his *Zakāt*, he refused, repeating his refusal more than once, thus becoming accursed for having

Others have nothing but appetites and pleasures in mind. They are likened to cattle, as God the Exalted says, "Do you think that most of them hear or understand? They are like cattle; but they are even more astray."<sup>85</sup>

There are others still, those who frequently pursue worldly things for the purpose of boasting, bragging, and competition. These are considered delusional fools or, worse still, ruined losers. "Each people know their drinking place,"<sup>86</sup> and your Lord knows what their breasts hide and what they reveal."<sup>87</sup>

O my brother, counsel yourself honestly and do not betray yourself by feigning something you do not really intend, for you will then have combined bankruptcy with false pretense and will lose both this world and the Next; "*This is the manifest loss.*"<sup>88</sup>

Now that the foregoing has been elucidated, let us now move on to the conclusion, which includes verses from the Book of God, traditions from the *Sunna* of the Messenger of God ﷺ, and wise sayings from men of God. These concern the insignificance of this world, the speed with which it perishes, and the foolishness of those who are deceived by it and trust in it, and serve to encourage those who read them who possess hearts or listen with attentiveness, to detach themselves from this world.

God the Exalted says (and His utterance is the reality and His words the truth):

The likeness of the life of this world is that of water which We send down from the sky, then the plants of the earth mingled with it, from which men and cattle eat. Then when the earth takes on its ornaments and is embellished, and its people think they have power over it, Our command comes down upon it by night or day, and We make it as reaped [wheat], as if it had not been flourishing the previous day. Thus, do We make plain Our signs for a people who reflect.<sup>89</sup>

We have placed all that is in the earth as an ornament for it, that We may try them as to which of them is best in conduct. Then We will surely reduce all that is on it to barren dust.<sup>90</sup>

And do not strain your eyes toward what We have given some of them to

---

broken his promise to God and His Prophet ﷺ and barring himself from the way to repent or return to Islam.

enjoy from the splendor of the life of this world, through which We only test them. The provision of your Lord is better and more lasting.<sup>91</sup>

He who seeks the harvest of the Hereafter, we increase his harvest; and he who seeks the harvest of this world, We give him of it here, but in the Hereafter he will have no portion.<sup>92</sup>

Know that the life of this world is but play and diversions and adornment and boasting among you and rivalry regarding wealth and children; just as the likeness of rain, the tillers rejoice over its [resulting] vegetation, but then it withers and you see it turn yellow, soon becoming stubble. In the Hereafter, there is severe torment, and [also] forgiveness from God and [His] good pleasure, whereas the life of this world is but the comfort of the deluded.<sup>93</sup>

As for those who transgress and prefer the life of this world, Hell indeed is the abode.<sup>94</sup>

And the Messenger of God ﷺ said:

*This world is accursed, and accursed be what is in it, except the Remembrance of God and what leads to it, the learned, and those learning.*<sup>95</sup>

*Had this world weighed with God the wing of a gnat, He would not have allowed a disbeliever a single sip of its water.*<sup>96</sup>

This world is foul carrion.<sup>97</sup>

*God the Exalted has made what comes out of the Son of Adam the example for this world.*<sup>98</sup>

*This world compared to the Hereafter is just like one of you dipping his finger in the ocean, looking at what it brings back.*<sup>99</sup>

*On Resurrection Day each person with some wealth will wish that he had been given nothing of this world more than his necessary sustenance.*<sup>99</sup>

A difficult obstacle stands before you, and only those who are lightly laden

---

91 This utterance was not found as a *ḥadīth* in the sources we consulted, but Imām 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib is quoted as saying, "This world is carrion, so he who wishes anything from it will have to contend with its dogs." (Abū Nu'aym, *Hilyat al-Awliya'* 8/238).

will cross it. A man asked, "*Am I one of the lightly laden, O Messenger of God?*" He said, "*Are you in possession of your day's provision?*" He replied, "Yes!" He asked, "*Are you in possession of tomorrow's provision?*" He replied "No!" At which the Messenger of God ﷺ said, "*Had you been in possession of tomorrow's provision, you would not have been one of the lightly laden.*"<sup>100</sup>

*This world is fair and green and God has given you mastery over it to see how you will do. So beware of the world and beware of women.*<sup>101</sup>

*By God, it is not poverty that I fear for you, but I fear that this world will be given to you freely as it was freely given to those before you, that you shall compete for it as those before you did, and that it shall destroy you as it destroyed them.*<sup>102</sup>

*Among the things I fear for you after me is that which will be given to you from among the beauties of this world, its attractions and embellishments.*<sup>103</sup>

*Beware of this world for it is more enchanting than Hārūt and Mārūt.*<sup>104</sup>

*This world is the prison of the believer and the Garden of the disbeliever.*<sup>105</sup>

*God keeps the world away from His believing servant, just as a careful shepherd keeps his flock away from dangerous pastures.*<sup>106</sup>

*A sin that cannot be forgiven: the love of this world.*<sup>107</sup>

01 Bayhaqī, Shu'ab al-Imān, 10022. *Hārūt* and *Mārūt* are the two fallen angels who tempted the people of Babylon by teaching them how to make magic. But they always warned them first that to make magic was tantamount to disbelief. However, the attraction of what they taught was so great that people still went to them to learn, even having understood that to do so meant permanent punishment in Hell. And that which was sent down to *Hārūt* and *Mārūt*, the two angels at Babylon. Nor did they teach it to anyone until they had said, "We are only a temptation, so do not disbelieve!" (Qur'ān, 2:102).

02 This utterance was not found in the sources. What is there, however, is the following hadith in Ṭabarānī, Kabīr, 6133; and Saghīr, 102. A sin that cannot be forgiven, a sin that cannot be passed over, and a sin that can be forgiven. As for that which cannot be forgiven, it is association with God (Shirk); as for that which can be forgiven, it is that between a person and God; and as for that which cannot be passed over, it is the wrong committed by the people against each other. It is possible that the meaning intended by the Imām is that when loving the world becomes another god in the heart, in competition with God, then it becomes shirk, the sin that cannot be forgiven. The version here would then be a paraphrase to allow such a meaning to be conveyed.

## Mutual Reminding

*He who loves his Afterlife slights his world, and he who loves his world slights his Afterlife. Choose that which is permanent over that which is ephemeral!*<sup>106</sup>

*Bitter this world, sweet the Hereafter; sweet this world, bitter the Hereafter.*<sup>107</sup>

*Those who possess plenty will be those who possess little on Judgment Day, except for those who do this and this. [The Prophet ﷺ gestured with his hand as one giving away money this side and that side.]*<sup>108</sup>

*Some people will be brought on Judgment Day who have works like the mountains of Tihāma, but these will be turned into scattered dust and they will be ordered into the Fire. They pray and fast and keep vigil part of the night, but when something of this world catches their attention, they pounce on it.*<sup>109</sup>

*What have I to do with this world? The likeness of myself and this world is that of a rider riding on a hot day: he rests under a tree for a while, then moves on.*<sup>110</sup>

*He who wakes up in the morning, secure in his home, healthy in his body, possessing his day's provision, he is as if the whole world had been given to him.*<sup>111</sup>

*I was sent for the ruin of this world; he who works for its prosperity is not of me.*<sup>112</sup>

*He whose intention is the Hereafter, God makes him rich in his heart, gathers his affair for him, and the world comes to him subdued. But he whose intention is this world, God places poverty between his eyes, disperses his affair, and nothing of this world will come to him save that which was written for him.*<sup>113</sup>

*Be in this world as a stranger or a passerby, and count yourself among the people of the graves.*<sup>114</sup>

*Renounce this world and God will love you. Renounce what is in people's hands and people will love you.*<sup>115</sup>

*This world is the abode of he who has no abode and the wealth of he who has no wealth. He who is mindless amasses it.*<sup>116</sup>

*He who has no knowledge grieves for it, he who has no understanding envies others for it, and he who has no certainty rejoices in it.*<sup>117</sup>

01 See endnote 72.

02 Ṭabarānī, Kabīr, 4891; Bayhaqī, Shuʿab al-Īmān, 1606.

03 This is not part of the *ḥadīth*, but an addition to it.

*The love of this world never settles in the heart of a servant [of God] without him being afflicted with three things: preoccupation, the pressure of which never relents; poverty that never reaches sufficiency; and hope whose limit is never reached.*

*This world and the Hereafter are both seekers and sought. He who seeks the Hereafter, the world seeks him until he receives all his provision, but he who seeks this world, the Hereafter seeks him until death grasps him by the throat. The fortunate is he who prefers that which is permanent and of lasting pleasure over that which is ephemeral and of endless torment. He is the one who gives of what is now in his hand for the sake of where he is going, before leaving it to those who will happily spend it after he has toiled to accumulate and monopolize it."<sup>5</sup>*

*Wretched is the servant of the Dinār, the Dirham, and fine attire. When given he is satisfied, but when not he becomes resentful. Wretched be he and abased; and if he is pricked may he not be treated!"<sup>6</sup>*

*Renouncing this world is a relief to both the heart and the body, whereas desire for this world increases anxiety and sorrow. Idleness hardens the heart."<sup>7</sup>*

*When light penetrates into the heart it makes room for it and expands. They asked, "Is there an outward sign of this?" He replied, Indeed, shunning the abode of illusion, attending to the abode of immortality, and preparing for death before its occurrence."<sup>8</sup>*

God revealed to Moses ﷺ, "O Moses! When I love My servant, I hide the world from him, thus do I treat those I love! O Moses! When you see, wealth coming, say, 'A sin, the punishment of which has been hastened!' But when you see poverty coming, say, 'Welcome to the inner garment of the virtuous!'"

God revealed to David, ﷺ, "O David! He who prefers the desires of this world over the pleasures of the Hereafter, he has grasped the loose handhold. But he who prefers the desire for the Hereafter over the pleasures of this world, he has grasped the firm handhold that never breaks."

God revealed to Jesus ﷺ, "O Jesus! Tell the Children of Israel to remember two things from Me: tell them to be content with little of their world for the safety of their religion; just as the people of this world are content with little religion for the safety of their world."

In a revealed scripture God says, "The least I do to a scholar who finds



comfort in this world is to remove the sweetness of communing with Me from his heart."

It is said that God the Exalted said to the world, "O world! Be bitter for my protégés—be not sweet for them so as not to tempt them."

ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib ؑ said, "The likeness of this world and the Hereafter is that of the east and the west; the nearer you draw to the one, the farther you move from the other. They are like the two wives, when you please the one, you anger the other. And they are like two vessels, one empty and the other full; when you pour into the empty one, the other diminishes accordingly."

He ؑ said "I found this world to be six things: That which is eaten, the best tasting of which is honey, and it is the secretion of an insect; that which is drunk, the best of it being water, and in this both the righteous and the depraved are equal; that which is smelled, the most fragrant of which is musk, and it is the bodily fluid of an animal; that which is worn, the softest of which is silk, and it is the weaving of a worm; that which is ridden, the worthiest of which is the mare, and it is that on whose back men are slain; and those whom one marries, it involving nothing but base fluid in base fluid. It is sufficient for you to know that although a woman adorns herself with the finest she has, your desire for her is for the basest she has!"<sup>or</sup>

He said ؑ "Happy are those who renounce the world and desire the Hereafter. They are people who take the ground for a carpet, its dust for a bed, its water for perfume, and make supplication and the Qurʾān their inner and outer garments. They reject the world according to the pattern of Jesus, may peace be upon him."

In this vein they recited:

*God's astute men divorce the world and fear temptation.  
They look at it and realize that it is no homeland for the living.  
They treat it as a sea, making out of their good works ships.*

Ṣāʿid ibn al-Musayyab ؑ said, "This world is vile and it resembles vile people. The vilest is he who acquires it in a manner he should not have," that is, illicitly.

Al-Ḥasan al-Basrī ؑ said, "Death has exposed this world and left no joy in it for anyone who discerns. May God have mercy on a man who wears

---

or See translator's Appendix One.

worn out clothes, eats a crust of bread, keeps low to the ground, weeps for his sins, and perseveres in worship."

He has said, ﷺ "When love of this world enters the heart, fear of the Hereafter exits from it. Beware of worldly distractions, for no servant opens a door of this world without several doors of works for the Hereafter being shut before him."

"Wretched is the Son of Adam, he thinks his money too little but never his works. He rejoices when afflicted in his religion, but grieves when afflicted in his worldly things. This world was founded on ailments and diseases. Suppose you are free of ailments and cured of all disease, can you escape death?"

Muhammad al-Baqir ﷺ said, "What is this world? What can it ever be? Is it anything but a mount you ride, a robe you wear, or a woman you marry?"

Wahb ibn Munabbih ﷺ said, "The Garden has eight gates. When people will reach them, the guardians will say, 'By our Lord's might! None shall enter before those who renounced the World and passionately loved the Garden!'"

Muhammad ibn Sirin said, "Two men quarreled about a piece of land. God said to it, 'Speak to them!' The land then said, 'O wretched ones! A thousand one-eyed men owned me before you, not to mention the healthy!'"

Abū Hāzim al-Madanī ﷺ said,

There is nothing in this world that will delight you without something attaching to it that will distress you. This world is a tortuous place, not of straightness; of toil, not of joy; of affliction, not of affluence.

His wife once told him, "Winter is coming, we must have food, clothes, and firewood." He answered, "All these are not inescapable necessities, what is inescapable is that we shall die, then be resurrected, then stand before God, then it will be either the Garden or the Fire."

You never extend your hand to something of this world without finding that a depraved man has gotten to it before you.

God's favor in that which He withholds from me of this world is greater than His favor in granting me some of it.

What has elapsed of the world is a dream, and what remains of it is but hopes.

Luqmān ﷺ said, "He who sells this world for the Next wins both, but

he who sells the Hereafter for this world loses both." And he counseled his son thus, "This world is a deep sea where many people have drowned, so let your ship on it be the fear of God, fill it with faith, let her sails be reliance, that perhaps you may be saved, but still I think you may not."

Mālik ibn Dinār said, ﷺ "When the body is ill, neither food nor beverage benefits it, nor sleep, nor rest. Similarly, the heart, if overcome by the love of this world, gets no benefits from counseling." And he said to his companions, "I shall pray, and you say *Amin*! O God! Allow nothing of this world into the house of Mālik, neither little nor a lot!"

When he went out of his house, he tied the door with a rope, saying, "Were it not for the dogs, I would have left it open."

Once he passed by a man planting a palm shoot. He remained away for a while then passed by the same place again, the shoot had taken root and produced. He inquired about the man and was told that he had died, so he said:

*He hoped for the world to remain his; but he who hoped died before his hope  
He planted a shoot and took care of it; the shoot lived on and the man died*

A *ḥadīth* says that *Lā ilāha illā llāh* protects those who say it from the wrath of God unless they come to trade their religion for this world, then when they say it, God will say: "You lie! You do not mean it in truth!"<sup>99</sup>

One of our ancestors used to say, "O You who keeps the sky from falling upon the earth, keep this world away from me!"

Ibrāhīm ibn Adham once entered upon [the Caliph] al-Mansūr. The latter asked him, "O Ibrāhīm, what do you have to say?" He answered, "We patch up our world by tearing our religion into pieces, so that neither our religion remains, nor what we are patching."

A man said to Dāwūd al-Ṭā'ī, "Counsel me!" He replied, "Fast from the world and break your fast with the Hereafter, and run away from people as you would from a lion!"

Another man saw him in a dream, running. He asked him, "O Abū Sulāyman, what is up with you?" He replied, "Just now I have escaped from prison!" Having awakened, the man was told, "Dāwūd al-Ṭā'ī has died."

Al-Fudayl ibn 'Iyād—may God's mercy be upon him—said, "All evil is gathered in a house, the key of which is desire for this world; and all good is gathered in a house, the key of which is renunciation of the world." And

he said, "Had the world been made of perishable gold and the Hereafter of permanent clay, we should have preferred permanent clay to perishable gold. What, then, when the world is ephemeral clay and the Hereafter permanent gold?" He said, moreover, "Were this world to be brought to me and were it to be said, 'Take it, licitly, with no reckoning!' I would have protected myself from its filth as one of you protects himself from a carcass he passes lest it soils his clothes."

Imām al-Shāfiʿī ؓ said, "Were this world to be sold on the market, I would not buy it for a loaf of bread, for the troubles it contains."

Bishr ibn al-Hārith ؓ said, "He who asks of His Lord this world is asking Him to prolong his standing before Him [on Judgment Day]."

Darrār ibn Damra said, describing ʿAlī ؓ,

He felt estranged from the world and its beauty, and was intimate with night and its darkness. I bear witness that I saw him once when night had fallen, and the stars had risen, wakeful in his retreat, like a man that had been stung, restless as though wounded, weeping sorrowfully, holding his beard, and saying, "O world! Deceive other than myself! Is it for me that you beautify yourself? Is it to me that you manifest yourself? I have divorced you thrice; there can be no return, for your span is short, your worth insignificant, and your danger great! Ah! The scarcity of provision, the length of the way, and the estrangement of traveling!"

One of our ancestors said, "Wretched is the Son of Adam: he is satisfied with an abode in which what is licit leads to reckoning, and what is illicit leads to torment. When he takes it licitly, he is asked to account for its pleasure; if he takes it illicitly he is tormented for it."

Yahyā ibn Muʿādh ؓ said, "Let your gaze upon this world be a lesson, your renunciation of it a choice, and you're taking from it a necessity." And he said, ؓ "I have abandoned this world because of its excessive troubles, its lack of sufficiency, the speed with which it withers, and the resentful envy of the companions it gives you." He also said, "This world is Satan's shop: he who takes anything from it, he follows him until he retrieves it. This world from beginning to end is not worth an hour's grief, how more so, than, with a lifetime of grief and still a small share of it?"

[Caliph Hārūn] al-Rashīd once asked for a drink of water and it was brought to him. Ibn al-Sammāk was there. He asked him, "Were you to be

prevented from drinking this water, would you buy it with your kingdom?" He said, "Yes!" He said, "Vile is a world that is not worth a drink of water!"

One of the ancients who had lived very long was asked to describe the world. He said, "A house with two doors; I entered through one and exited through the other. I saw years of affliction and years of affluence, newborn babies being born and dying men die; were it not for the newborn none would remain, were it not for the dead the world would be unable to contain them."

A sage once said, "This world is but ruin; more ruined is the heart of he who works for it. The Hereafter is flourishing; more flourishing is the heart of he who works for it."

Another sage was asked, "Who does this world belong to?" He said, "To he who abandons it." They said, "Who does the Hereafter belong to?" He said "To he who seeks it."

An ascetic was asked, "How do you perceive this world?" He said, "Bodies are wearing out, yet hopes are ever renewed; death is ever approaching and hopes ever receding." They said, "How about its people?" He said, "He who has acquired it is stressed and he who has missed it is distressed."

The Imām, the Proof of Islam, says in the *Ihyā'*:

This world is God's enemy, that of His saints, and that of His enemies. As for being God's enemy, it is by obstructing God's servants' path. This is why He has not looked at it since He created it. As for being God's saints' enemy, it is by its adorning itself for them, overwhelming them with its beauty and freshness, so that they have to bear the bitterness of patience in resisting it. As for being God's enemies' enemy, it is by its luring them with its cunning and stratagems, catching them in its net, so that they trust in it and depend on it. But it will let them down at their time of greatest need, so that all they reap from it is severe grief. Then it will deprive them of happiness forever. They are sorry to leave it, they cry out for help against its ruses, but no help is forthcoming. On the contrary, it is said to them: "Fall back therein and do not speak to Me!"<sup>120</sup> Those are they who traded the life of this world for the Hereafter, their torment will not be lightened, nor will they be helped."<sup>121</sup>

Verses and *ḥadīths* concerning this subject are more numerous than can be counted or exhausted. That which we have quoted should be sufficient,

a lesson for he who reflects and a reminder for he who remembers: "Only they remember who are repentant."<sup>122</sup>

#### AFTERWORD

We conclude by quoting some of the utterances of the Leader of all Ascetics, God's proof against them, Jesus son of Mary, may the best of blessings and peace be upon our Prophet Muḥammad and him.

This world is a bridge, so cross it; do not build on it! O seeker of this world, who wishes to use it righteously, your leaving it aside is even more righteous.

The love of this world and that of the Hereafter cannot be united in the believing heart, just as water and fire cannot be united in a single vessel.

This world is but whatever contingencies come to hand, and are consumed by both the righteous and the depraved. The Hereafter is a true promise; there judgment belongs to an Able King.

Do not take this world for a lord, that it may not take you for slaves. Store up your treasures with He who will not lose them, for worldly treasures are prone to be stricken with calamity. But whoever's treasure is with God fears no calamities.

My food is hunger, my inner garment is fear, my clothing is wool, my prayer in winter is when the sun rises, my lamp is the moon, my riding mount is my two feet, my food and fruit are what the earth grows. I sleep by night in possession of nothing, yet I see none on earth richer than I.

I wonder at he who is forgetful but not forgotten<sup>01</sup>, he who hopes for this world when death is seeking him, he who builds a palace when death is seeking him, and he who builds a palace when the grave is his dwelling. The fear of God and the love of Paradise<sup>02</sup> separate one from the beauties of this world and grant him patience in hardship. Eating barley and sleeping on refuse heaps with the dogs is a small price for Paradise.

01 That is, he who is forgetful of God and the Hereafter but is never forgotten by God who watches his every movement.

02 *Al-Firdaws*, rendered here as Paradise, is the highest degree of the Garden.

O Apostles! I have thrown the world down on its face for you, do not revive it after I am gone!

They once said to [Jesus], "How is it that you can walk on water but we cannot?" He asked, "How do you value the *Dīnār* and the *Dirham*?" They replied "Highly!" He said. "To me they are like pebbles and dust."

When he once rested his head on a stone, Satan came to him saying, "O Jesus! You have found comfort in this world!" So he threw the stone at him, saying, "This is all I had of it!"

On another occasion, he was exposed to heavy rain, with lightning and thunder. He saw a tent and headed towards it, but found a woman there and so departed. Then he saw a cave and went to it, but found a lion there. He said, "O God! To each of these You have provided refuge, but to me You gave no refuge!" And God revealed to him, "Your refuge is in the resting place of My mercy. I shall give you thousands of maidens to marry and I shall feed the people of the Garden thousands of years for your wedding."

Jesus ﷺ said:

O Son of Adam! If what you desire from this world is sufficiency, a little of it should suffice you; but if you desire more than your sufficiency, the entire world will not suffice you. Do not ruin yourselves by pursuing this world. Control your egos by abandoning what the world contains, for you have entered it naked and naked you will leave it. Ask God for provision one day at a time and know that God has made this world brief; what remains of it is a brief spell of what was already brief. Furthermore, what was limpid of it has already been drunk and only turbidity remains. And know that this world is a dwelling of punishment and illusion, so be in it as a man nursing his wound. He endures the pain of medicine, hoping for cure and freedom from illness. Let not what you see of this world lure you away from the Hereafter which you do not see!

Jesus ﷺ said, "Strange it is, you working for this world when your provision comes to you without work, and you're not working for the Hereafter, when you will not be provided in it save by working now."

The world showed itself to Jesus—may peace be upon him—in the form of an elaborately adorned woman. He asked her, "Do you have a husband?" She said, "Many!" He asked, "Have they all divorced you, died, and left you, or have you killed them all?" She said, "I have killed them all!" He

asked her, "Did you grieve over any of them?" She replied, "They grieve over me, but I do not grieve over them. They weep over me, but I do not weep over them!" He said, "Strange, then, how your remaining husbands do not learn from your past ones."

Jesus ~~sa~~ once passed by a group of people who were all worshipping God, except one who was asleep. He said, "O you! Arise and worship God with your companions!" He replied, "I have worshipped Him with better than their worship, for I have renounced the world!" Jesus—peace be upon him—then said, "Sleep contentedly, for you have outstripped the worshippers!"

He was asked about God's protégés, those who "have no fear, neither do they grieve,"<sup>o1</sup> so he replied:

They are those who look at the inward of this world, while others look at its outward. They concentrate on what is to come after this world, while others concentrate on what is there now. They destroy that which they fear might destroy them and abandon that which they know will abandon them. Whatever contingent pleasure comes their way they refuse; whatever deceitful eminence comes to them they turn it down. Their world is worn out, but they do not renew it; it is in ruins around them, but they do not rebuild it; it is dead in their breasts, but they do not revive it. On the contrary, they demolish it to build their life-to-come, sell it to buy what will remain theirs. They look at its people, afflicted with misfortunes, fallen down, and see no safety short of what they hope for, no fear other than what they fear.

This brings to completion *The Treatise of Mutual Reminding among Loving Brothers, People of Goodness and Religion*. I have only entitled it this way because it was written for mutual reminding with them. May God inspire us and them with guidance and protect us from the evil in ourselves.

Everything quoted in this treatise, whether Prophetic traditions or otherwise, was taken from authentic authoritative books. The *hadiths* quoted in the conclusion are about twenty in number, but by omitting to separate them from each other they seem to be four or five. I did this believing it would be briefer and more likely to produce the desired effect.

"All praise belongs to God, to whom belongs all that is in the heavens and earth. Praise is His in the Hereafter and He is the Wise, the Aware.

<sup>o1</sup> A reference to Qur'an 10:62. Truly God's protégés have no fear, neither do they grieve.



He knows what enters the earth and what comes out of it, what comes down from the sky and what ascends to it, and He is the Compassionate, the Forgiving."<sup>13</sup>

And may God's blessings and peace be upon our master Muḥammad, his Family and Companions, until the Day of Resurrection and Arising, and may peace be upon the Messengers, and praise is for God, Lord of the worlds.

Dictation of this treatise was completed on Sunday, before noon, the first day of Jumādā al-Awwal, a month of the year 1069 of the Prophet's Emigration, may the best of blessings and peace be upon him, and praise is for God, Lord of the worlds.

# *Good Manners*

---

TREATISE OF THE GOOD MANNERS  
OF THE SPIRITUAL DISCIPLE'S WAYFARING

IMAM 'ABDALLAH  
IBN 'ALAWI AL-ḤADDĀD





## Prologue

In the Name of God, All-Merciful and Compassionate  
Ability and strength are only by God, the High, the Formidable.

Praise belongs to God who, when He so wills, casts into the hearts of seekers the ardor of longing, thereby driving them to travel the path to happiness, which is faith, worship, and the extinction of all formalism and habits.<sup>01</sup>

May God send His blessings and peace upon our master Muḥammad, the Master of masters, and upon his family and Companions, who are the masters and leaders.

To proceed: God the Exalted has said — and He is the most truthful of all speakers, “Whoever desires the immediate, We shall hasten what We will of it to whomever We will; then We shall appoint for him Hell, in which he will be plunged — blamed and defeated. But whoever desires the Hereafter and earnestly strives for it, while being a believer, these shall have their striving rewarded.”<sup>124</sup> The immediate is this world. Therefore, if he who merely desires it, let alone actively pursues it, ends up in the Fire, blamed and belittled, should not a man of reason beware and turn away from it? The *Hereafter* here means the Garden. It is not enough merely to desire it in order to gain it. Faith and good works are both necessary, as is indicated by the expression, *and earnestly strives for it, while being a believer*. The striving to be rewarded is those deeds that are accepted by God, thereby deserving

---

01 Formalism is to become a slave to the Sacred Law as such, rather than to the One who revealed it. It means to be so taken by outward conformity as to neglect the more essential inward aspect which is the purification of the heart. Again, to be a slave to one's habits is detrimental to being a slave to one's Lord. The seeker of the Lord must liberate himself from slavery to any other than Him.

praise and such great rewards as are without limit or end—all by the grace of God and His mercy. The complete loser, the seeker of this world who falls under the Qur'ānic threats, is he whose desire for it is so powerful that it causes him to forget the Hereafter, either denying it altogether, or believing in it though not working accordingly. The first is a disbeliever who will be in Hell forever, while the second is a transgressor marked for loss.

The Messenger of God ﷺ has said, *“Deeds depend on intentions; each man receives according to what he has intended. Thus, he whose emigration is for God and His Messenger, he has emigrated for God and His Messenger; and he whose emigration is for worldly things that he wishes to acquire or a woman he wishes to marry, he has emigrated to that which he has intended.”*<sup>15</sup> The Prophet ﷺ thus informed us that a deed is only as valid as the intention behind it, and that people are rewarded according to their intentions. When these are good, they receive nothing but good and when these are evil, they receive nothing but evil. He whose intention is good, his deed is inevitably good, and he whose intention is malicious, his deed is inevitably malicious, even if it appears good outwardly, as in the case of a man who behaves in a righteous way only to appear righteous in the eyes of others.

The Prophet ﷺ also informed us that he who acts for the sake of God by following in the footsteps of the Messenger of God ﷺ his reward is with God, Who will be pleased with him and make his last abode His Garden, near Him and in the company of the best of His people. He whose intentions go toward other than God and who acts accordingly, his rewards are with those he intended; those he performed for, who can neither attract benefit nor fend off harm from him or their own selves, nor can they bring about life, death, or resurrection. The Prophet ﷺ chose to speak of “emigration” by way of providing an example that can be generalized—as is well known to people of understanding—to all the laws of Islam.

I now say this: Know, O disciple, O seeker intently directing himself toward God, that when you requested me to send you some of our teachings, I found nothing [ready] that would suit your purpose. Therefore, I decided to record some brief chapters containing, in an accessible manner of expression, some of the good manners of discipleship.

It is God whom I ask to benefit me, you, and all other brothers with what He inspires in me of this matter and allows me to reach. He is my sufficiency and the best of Guardians.



[1] THE BEGINNING OF THE PATH IS A  
POWERFUL URGE OF DIVINE ORIGIN  
WHICH SHOULD BE STRENGTHENED,  
PROTECTED, AND RESPONDED TO

Know that the Path begins when a powerful urge is cast into the heart of the servant which troubles and unnerves him, and drives him to seek God and the Final Abode. It turns him away from this world and from being, like others, engaged in amassing and grooming it, enjoying its pleasures, and being deceived by its ornaments. This urge is one of the hidden warriors of God, a gift of solicitude and a sign of right guidance. It is often bestowed upon a servant as he listens to those who stir in him the fear [of God] as well as desire and yearning [for Him], and when he looks at the men of God and they look at him, but it can also be granted without cause.

We are actively commanded and encouraged to expose ourselves to receive such gifts, for the expectation to receive something when not standing at the door and exposing oneself is foolish and unintelligent. How can it not be so when the Messenger of God ﷺ has said, "*Your Lord grants gifts in the days of your time, expose yourself to them!*"<sup>126</sup>

Let he who God honors with such a noble urge know how precious it is. Let him also know that it is one of the greatest favors of God—Exalted is He—such that he will never fully appreciate how truly precious it is, nor will he ever be able to show enough gratitude for it. So let him thank God—Exalted is He—to his utmost for having selected him from among his peers to receive it; how many a Muslim reaches the age of eighty or more and neither finds this yearning nor is affected by it a single day of his life!

A disciple [*murīd*] should do his best to strengthen, protect, and respond to this urge.

Strengthening it is accomplished by remembering God often, reflecting on what He has, and keeping the company of the people of God.

Protecting it is by keeping away from the company of those who are veiled and by ignoring the insinuations of the devils.

Responding to it is by hastening to return to God, sincerely seeking His nearness, and neither waiting, postponing, procrastinating, or delaying. This is an opportunity that has been granted and should be seized; the door is now open, so let him enter. He has been called and should be swift to answer. Let him beware of letting days pass one after the other, for this is the work of the Devil. He must advance and not weaken. He must refrain from invoking excuses such as lacking time or not being good enough for the task. Abu'l-Rabi' ؒ said, "Go to God with your limping and your broken limbs. Do not wait for full health, for that would only be idleness." And Ibn 'Atā'illāh says in his *Hikam*, "To say that the work must be postponed until one is free is but the idleness of the soul."

## [2] REPENTANCE, ITS CONDITIONS, AND PROTECTING ONESELF FROM SINS

The first thing that a disciple should begin with on the path to God is sound repentance from all his sins. If he has treated unjustly any of God's creation, he should correct this by giving everyone their due. If this is not possible, he should ask them to release him from that obligation. Whoever is encumbered with debts to creation cannot proceed towards the Real.

It is a condition for sound repentance that one feels sincere remorse for his sins and be wholly determined never to relapse. If he does not desist in committing sins, or still harbors the intention to repeat them, his repentance is false.

A disciple should always be extremely aware of his shortcomings towards his Lord. When these shortcomings bring him sadness and his heart breaks, let him know that God is with him, for He says—Transcendent is He—"I am with those whose hearts break for My sake."

A disciple should protect himself from the smallest of sins—let alone major ones—with more urgency than one would protect himself from lethal poison. Should he commit one, he should be more frightened than if he had taken poison, for sins are to the heart what poison is to the body.

The heart of a disciple is more precious to him than his body, and he has no capital other than guarding and improving it. The body is a target for disease and is soon to be destroyed by death. Its death, however, means only that one has to leave this grief and anxiety-laden world. However, if it is the heart that is ruined, one's hereafter is ruined, for only he will be rescued from the wrath of God, gain His rewards, and win His pleasure, who comes to Him with a heart that is "whole."<sup>01</sup>

### [3] GUARDING THE HEART AGAINST INSINUATIONS, AILMENTS, AND ILL-THINKING

A disciple should strive to guard his heart against insinuations, ailments, and bad thoughts. He should guard its gate by constant vigilance and prevent these things from penetrating within, for should they do so they will ruin it and it will be difficult to expel them. He should purify his heart—which is the place his Lord's gaze falls upon—from worldly desires, spite, rancor, deceitfulness, or thinking ill of any Muslim. Rather, he must provide good advice to them, being compassionate and merciful. He must think well of them all, desiring for them whatever good he desires for himself, and disliking for them whatever evil he dislikes for himself.

Know, disciple, that the heart commits sins which are uglier, fouler, and more offensive than those committed by the limbs. A heart remains unfit for the direct knowledge of God and His love to descend into it until it rids itself of all such things.

Among the worst sins of the heart are arrogance, ostentation, and resentful envy. Arrogance is proof of great foolishness, excessive ignorance, and stupidity, for it is unbecoming of one who knows that he was made from a

<sup>01</sup> The expression: "whole heart" is *Qur'ānic*, as in the following verse; Humiliate me not on the day when they are resurrected, the Day when neither wealth nor sons will avail, but only he who comes to God with a whole heart. (*Qur'ān*, 26: 89). Wholeness of the heart is its freedom of any deities that one attends to besides God. At the basic level, it is freedom from associating idols, sun, moon, or any other creature with God. At a higher level, it is freedom from attending to wealth, family, social prominence, lust for power, or any other such passions of the soul to the detriment of obedience to God.



drop of fetid semen and soon enough will end up a decaying corpse. If he possesses virtues and good qualities, they are but gracious gifts of God's making; none of it was achieved by his own power, nor acquired by his own strength and cleverness. When he behaves with arrogance toward the servants of God, employing in so doing the gifts that God has graciously bestowed upon him, does he not fear that by behaving discourteously and attributing to himself what belongs to God, He might take away everything from him? Pride is an attribute of God, the Compeller, the Proud.

As for ostentation, it is proof that the heart is devoid of [the awareness of] the immensity and majesty of God, for it seeks the approval of creatures through feigning and is not content with the knowledge that God—the Lord of creation—knows all that he does. He who performs good deeds and likes it to be known, so that people would revere and serve him, is an ignorant hypocrite whose desire is but for this world. The ascetic is one who finds it repugnant when people offer him reverence and wealth, and he seeks to avoid them. Who can be more ignorant than one who seeks the Hereafter by acts of this world? If he is unable to renounce the world, then the least he can do is to seek it from its Owner, and that is God. The hearts of creation are in His hand; He it is who makes them incline toward one who seeks Him, and He it is who makes them serve him.

As for resentful envy, it is manifest enmity to God and clear opposition to Him in His kingdom. When God the Exalted bestows gifts on some of His servants, it is evidence that this is what He has chosen for them and wishes them to receive, for none forces His hand. If the servant wants something different from what his Lord wants, he is discourteous and deserves to come to grief.

Things of this world such as prestige and wealth are subject to resentful envy, both of which are too insignificant to be deemed enviable. On the contrary, you should pity those who have been afflicted with them and thank God for sparing you. However, envy can also target things associated with the Hereafter, such as knowledge and virtue. It is ugly in a disciple to be jealous and resent a companion who follows the same path and has given him help. On the contrary, he should rejoice for the help he receives from him and derive strength from the fact that they are alike. A believer finds strength in his brother. What a disciple should do is inwardly desire and outwardly act to gather people to tread together the path to God

and be active in His obedience. He should not care whether they become better than him or he better than them, for this is granted by God, and He—Transcendent and Exalted is He—selects whom He will for His mercy.

There are many other blameworthy qualities of the heart which we have not mentioned for the sake of brevity. We have only cautioned against their major sources. The origin, foundation, and root of them all is love of this world. Its love is the head of every sin, as has been transmitted. When the heart is free from it, it becomes healthy and clear, enlightened and fragrant, fit to receive the lights and have the secrets unveiled to it.

#### [4] GUARDING THE SENSES AGAINST TRANSGRESSIONS AND AGAINST BEING DECEIVED BY THIS WORLD

A disciple should strive to restrain his senses and limbs from transgressions and sins, only using them in obedience, and only in those things that would benefit him in the Hereafter.

He should take great care to guard his tongue, for its size is small but its crimes great. Let him prevent it from lying, backbiting, and other forms of forbidden speech. Let him beware of lewdness, and of delving into what does not concern him, even if it is not forbidden as such, for it hardens the heart and wastes time. A disciple should only move his tongue in reciting the Qur'ān, the Remembrance of God, giving advice to a Muslim, enjoining good and forbidding evil, and also for such worldly things that relate to the Hereafter. The Prophet ﷺ said, *"The speech of the Son of Adam will be counted against him, not for him, except for enjoining good, forbidding evil, and remembering God."*<sup>127</sup>

Know that hearing and eyesight are two open doors through which anything that enters reaches the heart. How many things does a man hear or see, which he should not have, which once they enter and affect the heart prove difficult to remove? For the heart is rapidly affected by all that enters it and the effect is difficult to erase. Therefore, let the disciple be careful to protect his hearing and sight, and strive to restrain all his senses and limbs from sins and from the superfluous. Let him beware of looking with approval at the beauties and attractions of this world, for its outward

is deception and its inward a lesson in wisdom. The eye regards its outward enticements, but the heart sees the lesson hidden within. How many a disciple looked at some of the beauties of this world and his heart leaned toward them, admired them, and became inclined to amass and fructify. So lower your gaze, disciple, and look at creation only with the intention of seeing the lesson within it. This means that you should remember as you look at it that it will wither away and return to where it came from, which is from non-existence; that it has been gazed upon by countless people who are now gone, while it still remains, to be bequeathed by each generation to the next. Look at creatures with an eye that sees them as evidence of their Designer and Creator's perfect power—Transcendent is He. Every creation says with the tongue of its state, "There is no god other than God, the August, the Wise." This is what the people of enlightened hearts—who perceive by the light of God—can hear.

[5] REMAINING IN A STATE OF PURITY  
AND PREFERRING HUNGER TO SATIETY

A disciple should maintain a state of ritual purity, and whenever he loses it should perform his ritual ablutions, followed by two *rak'as*. When he is intimate with his wife, he must take an immediate *ghusl* and not remain impure. He should make it easy for himself to maintain ritual purity by eating little, for the one who eats much breaks his *wūdu'* often and finds it an effort to maintain purity. Eating little is also of help in staying awake at night, which is one of the most important activities of a disciple. He should eat only when necessary and sleep only when overcome by fatigue. He should speak only when necessary and mix only with people from whom he can benefit. The one who eats much, his heart grows hard, and his limbs become too heavy for acts of worship. Eating much makes one sleep much and talk much. When a disciple sleeps much and talks much his quest becomes an empty shell devoid of substance. A *ḥadith* states, "*The Son of Adam never fills a worse vessel than his stomach. It should suffice the Son of Adam only a few morsels to keep his back straight, but if he must, then a third [of his stomach] for his food, a third for his beverage, and a third for his breath.*"<sup>128</sup>

## [6] DIRECTING ONE'S WHOLE ATTENTION TO GOD AND DEVOTING ONESELF TO HIS WORSHIP

A disciple should be the furthest of people from sins and forbidden acts, the most conscientious in carrying out his obligations, the most eager to actively draw nearer to God, and the swiftest in performing acts of goodness. This is because a disciple differs from other people only in his attending wholly to God, being obedient, and freeing himself from everything that may distract him from His devotions.

Let him spend his breaths carefully, guard his time avariciously, and only expend it in whatever takes him nearer to God and benefits him on the Day he meets Him. He should have a daily *wird*<sup>01</sup> of every sort of worship, so that he will have a number of them to keep to tenaciously, never allowing any of them to be neglected, however difficult the circumstance. He should recite the Immense Qur'ān frequently, reflect on its meanings and chant its words correctly. While reciting, he should be fully aware of the immensity of the Speaker, unlike those who recite with expert tongues and loud voices but are distracted, their hearts harboring neither exaltation nor reverence for God. They are those who read it in the form it was sent down, from its opening to its conclusion, yet know nothing of its meanings, nor of the reasons why each verse was revealed. Had they known, they would have acted; knowledge alone is of no use. The one who is ignorant and one who knows but does not act on his knowledge are no different, except that the latter will have a stronger case made against him before God. Seen in this light, the ignorant is in a better situation. This is why it was said, "Ignorance is better than knowledge that is of no benefit."

O disciple, have a share in the Night Prayers, for night is the time when the servant is alone with his Lord. Make abundant your pleas for help and forgiveness. Commune with your Lord with the tongue of the humble and needy, and a heart wherein complete helplessness and abasement are realized. Beware of neglecting night vigils, for dawn must always find you awake and remembering God—Transcendent and Exalted is He!

---

<sup>01</sup> A *wird* is often translated as "litany", namely, a litany of supplications and phrases of Remembrance of God that one says each day. But *wird* may also be any kind of supererogatory worship that is repeated regularly, such as non-obligatory ritual prayers, recitation of the Qur'ān, and the like.

[7] EXCELLENCE IN THE PERFORMANCE OF  
RITUAL PRAYERS; PRESENCE WITH GOD IS  
THE ESSENCE OF ALL ACTS OF WORSHIP

O disciple, strive to your utmost to correctly perform the Five Prayers, by making your standing, recitation, humility, bowing, prostrations, and the Prayers' other obligations and *Sunnas* complete in every way. Before entering into Prayer, summon to your heart the awesomeness of the One you wish to stand before—Majestic and High is He. Beware of communing with the King of kings, the Subduer of tyrants, with a distracted heart, deeply lost in the valleys of unawareness and whisperings, roaming the places of incidental thoughts and worldly ideas; in doing so you would deserve to be hateful to God and expelled from His doorstep. He ﷻ has said, "*When a servant stands up to pray, God turns His face toward him. Should the servant turn his gaze away, God the Exalted says, 'The Son of Adam has turned towards something better than I!' Should the servant turn away again, God says the same. When he looks away a third time, God turns away from him.*"<sup>129</sup> If this is the state of one who looks away physically, what about one who in the act of Prayer directs his heart to the fortunes and attractions of this world? God ﷻ looks at hearts and secrets, not at forms and appearances.

Know that the essence and meaning of worship is presence with God. Acts of worship which are devoid of presence are like dust, easily blown away. He who is not present with God in worship is like one who offers as a gift to a great king an empty coffer or a dead maid! How deserving will such a man be of punishment and being deprived of reward!

[8] CAUTION AGAINST NEGLECTING THE  
FRIDAY PRAYER AND OTHER CONGREGATIONAL  
PRAYERS; EXHORTATION TO PERFORM THE  
REGULAR SUPEREROGATORY PRAYERS

Strongly beware, O disciple, of leaving the Friday and other congregational Prayers, for such is the pattern of the indolent and the mark of the ignorant. Take care to perform the regular supererogatory prayers before and after the obligatory ones; persevere the *Witr* and *Duḥā* Prayers and keeping the interval between the two Night Prayers alive with devotions.

Be extremely careful to always keep alive the intervals between the Dawn Prayer and sunrise, and between the Afternoon Prayer and sunset, for these are noble times wherein those servants who turn to God receive the flow of His assistance. The time following the Dawn Prayer, when kept alive, has a powerful and specific effect in attracting material provision, whereas, the time following the Afternoon Prayer, if kept alive, has a powerful effect in attracting provisions for the heart. This has been experienced by the people of clear vision among the great Knowers. A *ḥadīth* states, "*He who sits where he has prayed, remembering God after the Dawn Prayer and until sunrise, is more likely to receive his provision than he who travels the horizons.*"<sup>130</sup>

### [9] EXHORTATION TO PERSEVERE IN REMEMBRANCE AND REFLECTION

What really counts on the path of God the Exalted, having obeyed His commands and avoided forbidden things, is to persevere in remembering Him; so keep to it, O disciple, in all situations, with heart and tongue, in all times and places.

The invocation which contains the meaning of all invocations and their fruits, both invisible and visible, is *Lā ilāha illa'llāh*. This is the invocation which people at the beginning are enjoined to keep and which people who are at the end return to.

He who would delight in tasting some of the secrets of the Path and having some of its realities unveiled before him, let him be intent on remembering God the Exalted with a heart that is present, courtesy that is abundant, attention that is sincere, and concentration that is piercing. Whenever these traits are combined in a person, to him is revealed the highest *Malakūt*, his spirit beholds the realities of the World of Utmost Purity, and the eye of his secret witnesses the Highest and Holiest Beauty.

Reflect frequently, O disciple. Reflection is of three kinds. The first is reflection upon the wonders of [Divine] Power and the marvels of the heavenly and earthly kingdoms. Its fruit is direct knowledge of God. The second is reflection upon the gifts of God and His graces. Its result is the love of God. The third is reflection upon this world, the Next, and the various states of the creation in both. Its benefit is turning away from this world and becoming attentive to the Hereafter. We have discoursed on the

various avenues of Reflection in the *Book of Assistance*, where they can be found by those who so desire.

[10] HOW TO REBUKE THE SOUL FROM  
BECOMING LAZY IN OBEDIENCE AND  
INCLINED TOWARDS DISOBEDIENCE

If you feel, O disciple, that your soul, through laziness and sloth, is moving away from submission and good actions, then lead it back by the reins of hope. Remind it of what God promises those who obey Him: vast bounty, permanent bliss, grace, contentment, eternity in the vastness of the Garden, honor, and the high rank and eminence—both with God and His servants—accorded by God the Exalted to His servants.

And if you feel that your soul is leaning toward rebellion or heading into sin, then use the whip of fear to rebuke it. Remind it of that which God threatens those who disobey Him: humiliation, calamity, debasement, vengeance, expulsion, deprivation, dejection and loss.

Beware of falling into the error of those who stray and belittle the Garden and the Fire! Magnify what God and His Messenger have magnified and act only for the sake of God, for He is your Lord and you are His slave. Ask Him to admit you to His Garden and ask His protection from His Fire by His grace and mercy.

Should the Devil—may God curse him!—tell you that God—Transcendent and High is He—neither needs you nor your deeds, that neither your submission will benefit Him, nor your rebellion harm Him, reply to him, “This is true! But I am the one in need of the graces of God and the good deeds. I am the one who benefits by submission and is harmed by disobedience. This is what my Lord says to me in His Noble Book and on the tongue of His Messenger ﷺ. If he then says to you, “If, in the knowledge of God, you are among the fortunate, you will inevitably end up in the Garden, whether you submit or rebel; and if, in the knowledge of God, you are among the wretched, you will end up in the Fire, even if you are obedient!”, you must ignore him, for the Decree is hidden; only God knows and none of creation has anything to do with it. Submission and obedience are the surest proof of predestined good fortune; nothing stands

between the obedient and the Garden, once he dies in a state of obedience. Whereas disobedience is the surest proof of predestined wretchedness, for nothing stands between the sinner and the Fire, once he dies in a state of sin.

## [11] ON THE STATES OF THE SOUL AND BEING PATIENT

Know, O disciple, that the beginning of the path is patience and its end is thankfulness. Its beginning is difficulty and its end is bliss. Its beginning is toil and weariness, and its end is opening, unveiling, and arrival at the ultimate goal which is direct knowledge of God, arrival to Him, being comforted by Him, and standing in His noble Presence with His angels standing before Him. He who makes gracious patience the foundation of all his affairs attains every goodness, reaches all that he hopes for, and wins all that he seeks.

Know to begin with, that the soul is 'Inciting'; it exhorts to evil and forbids the good. When one resists its commands and patiently endures what results from contradicting its whims, it becomes a 'Reproachful Soul'. The Reproachful Soul is changeful because it has two faces, one serene and the other inciting. It can be this on one occasion, and that on another. If one then gently guides it and leads it by the reins of the desire for that which God has in store, it becomes serene, enjoining good and finding its pleasure and comfort in it, and hence forbidding evil, being repelled by it and fleeing from it.

One whose soul is serene is greatly amazed by the way people turn away from acts of obedience and from the delight, comfort, and pleasure they bring about; how they rush into rebellion and lustful appetites, and the grief, estrangement, and bitterness they cause. He may think that the way they taste these two states is similar to his, but he then draws on his own experience for comparison and remembers how pleasurable he had once found it to satisfy his lusts, and how bitter it was to perform acts of obedience; then he understands that he only reached his present state after a long struggle, and by the immense grace of God.

You now know that it is the patience with which you stay away from sins and lustful desires and keep to acts of obedience that makes you reach



everything good, every noble station, and every lofty state. Does He ﷻ not say, "O you who believe, have patience, persevere, be vigilant, and fear God, that you may succeed!"<sup>131</sup> He ﷻ says "And the gracious word of your Lord was fulfilled in the Children of Israel because of their patience";<sup>132</sup> He ﷻ also says, "And We made of them leaders to guide by Our command, when they had patience and certainty in Our signs."<sup>133</sup> And one *ḥadīth* says, "*Certainty and determined patience are among the least of what you might be given. But one who is given a share of these two doesn't mind what he misses in night worship and daytime fasting.*"<sup>134</sup>

[12] HEEDING THE EXAMPLE OF THE PEOPLE  
OF FORTITUDE; PROVISION IS APPORTIONED

A disciple may be put through the hardships of poverty, need, and the narrowing of his channels of provision. He should thank God and consider this a great blessing, for this world is but an enemy which God drives towards His enemies, but deflects away from His close friends. Let him then thank God for making him resemble His Prophets, saints, and virtuous servants. The Master of Messengers and the best of creation, Muḥammad ﷺ used to tie a stone to his stomach to allay hunger. Two months and more would pass without a fire being lit in his house, neither for cooking nor for any other purpose. He survived on dates and water. One day he received a guest and sent for food to each of his nine houses, but none was found. When he died, his armor was pawned with a Jew for a few measures of barley which were, on that day, all that there was to eat in his house.

O disciple, let your worldly requirements be no more than a cloth to cover what should be covered and a morsel of licit food to allay your hunger. Beware the deadly poison of longing for worldly luxuries and pleasures and of envying those who enjoy them, for they will be called to account for what they partook and enjoyed of its pleasures. If you knew the hardships they must then endure, the bitterness they have to swallow, the troubles and anxieties they have to carry in their hearts and breasts, all of which come from pursuing the world, nurturing it, and guarding it carefully, you would see clearly that these far outweigh any pleasures enjoyed, if indeed pleasures there are.

It is enough to dissuade you from loving the world to know that God ﷻ says, "Were it not that people would have become all alike, We would have given those who disbelieve in the All-Merciful silver roofs for their houses and stairways to climb on, and for their houses doors [of silver] and couches on which to recline, and ornaments of gold. These are but the fleeting pleasures of the world, while the Hereafter is with your Lord for the God-fearing."<sup>135</sup> The Messenger of God ﷺ said, "*This world is the prison of the believer and the Garden of the disbeliever.*"<sup>136</sup> He also said, "*Had it been worth the wing of a gnat to God, He would never have allowed a disbeliever a single sip of its water.*"<sup>137</sup> It is enough to just know that since He created it, He has never looked at it.

Know that provision is divided and allocated by [Divine] decree. Some servants are treated liberally and given a large share, some are restricted to a small one; both manifest the wisdom of God. If you are, O disciple, one whose share is small, be patient and content; accept what God has allotted to you. If you are one of those who have received a large share, take what you need and spend the rest in ways of goodness and benevolence.

### [13] MOVING TOWARD GOD BEING COMPATIBLE WITH EARNING; DIVESTING ONESELF OF THE MEANS OF LIVELIHOOD IS NOT REQUISITE

Know that it is not necessary for a man who wishes to enter the Path to God to leave his wealth, craft, or commerce. What is necessary is to fear God in whatever he engages in and have moderation while pursuing his livelihood so as not to miss obligatory or supererogatory acts of worship. Neither should he fall into the forbidden, nor the superfluous, which is of no help on the way to God.

Should the disciple know that his heart would not be firm, nor his religion safe, except by shedding his wealth and all other means, then this becomes incumbent upon him. However, if he has wives or children who require expenditure and clothes, he must provide them their needs and exert himself in doing so. Only in the case where he might find himself incapable of doing so due for reasons acceptable by *Shari'a*, will he be blameless and safe from sin.

O disciple, know that only when you come to realize that your days in this world are few and your death near, will you be capable of persevering in your acts of obedience, of avoiding lustful appetites, and of turning away from this world. So keep your ultimate end before your eyes, make ready for death, and know that it may descend upon you at any moment. Beware of long hopes, for they sway you toward the love of the world and make it difficult for you to persevere in obedience, that is, in being intent on worship or devoting yourself to the Path of the Hereafter. From the realization that death is near and the time is short comes all good. Seek this, may God grant you and us success!

[14] PATIENTLY ENDURING THE HARM  
FROM OTHERS; ALSO, REMAIN WARY  
OF BEING TEMPTED BY THEM

People sometimes show hostility to a disciple. They may hurt him, treat him harshly, or speak of him disparagingly. Should you become afflicted by any such thing, you must remain patient, forsake retaliation, and keep your heart free from grudges and evil intentions. Beware of asking God to send down His wrath upon those who injure you. Should they happen to suffer a mishap, never say, "It is because of what they did to me."

Even better than to endure injury with equanimity is to forgive and pray for those who exhibit hostility, for such is the behavior of the *Siddiqūn*.

Should creation shun you, consider this to be a blessing from your Lord, for if people are solicitous to you, they may distract you from His obedience. Should you become afflicted by their solicitation, their respecting and praising you, beware of the effect this may have on you, and thank God for His hiding your faults from them. If you feel that they are distracting you from God, or if you fear falling into affectation, in an effort to appear fairer in their eyes, then shut your door and isolate yourself, or else leave the place in which you are known for one where you are not.

Always opt for anonymity and flee fame and publicity, for they are a test and a hardship. One of our Predecessors said, "By God! A servant, if truthful with God, will always love to pass unnoticed." Another has said, "I have never known a man to wish to become known but that his religion quit him and he became exposed."

[15] GETTING RID OF THE NEED TO  
OBTAIN OTHER PEOPLE'S APPROVAL

O disciple, strive to purify your heart of both fear of people and of putting your hopes in them, for these can cause you to keep silent in the face of falsehood, compromise your religion, and neglect enjoining good and forbidding evil. The latter alone would be ample humiliation, for a believer is strong by his Lord and neither fears nor hopes in other than Him.

When one of your brother Muslims offers you something to demonstrate his affection, take it if you need it, thank God—for He is the real Giver—and then thank the one God has chosen to deliver it to you. If you do not need it, see whether it would be better for your heart to take it or refuse it. If you refuse, do it tactfully so as not to hurt the heart of the giver, for a Muslim's feelings are of consequence to God. Beware both of refusing for the sake of acquiring a reputation, or accepting merely to satiate your appetites. However, the latter is better than turning something down to acquire a reputation of asceticism and of turning away from the world. A truthful person will not be confused (deciding whether to accept or refuse), for his Lord gives him a light in his heart by which he knows clearly what is required of him.

[16] REBUKING THE SEEKERS OF UNVEILINGS  
AND SUPERNATURAL EVENTS

One of the most harmful things for a disciple is to wish for unveilings and long for *karāmāt* and supernatural happenings, for these will never come to him so long as he desires their appearance; they come mostly to those who have a dislike for such things and no wish for them.

However, such things can happen to certain conceited people to lure them even more and test which among them are weak believers. In such a context, these are a cause for debasement rather than honor. They are considered *karāmāt* only when they occur to people of rectitude.

O disciple, should God ever honor you with such things, then thank Him for them—Transcendent is He—but do not dwell on them and become overconfident. Keep them hidden and mention them to no one. But if none occur to you, neither wish for them, nor grieve for their absence.

Know that the *karāma* that encompasses all other *karāmāt*, whether of [inward] realities or [outward] forms, is rectitude, which manifests itself in complying with [God's] commands and avoiding what is forbidden, outwardly and inwardly. Strive to fully achieve those qualities and then the higher and lower worlds will serve you, but in such a way so as not to veil you from your Lord, nor distract you from what He wants for you.

### [17] SEEKING PROVISION AND STRIVING FOR IT

O disciple, think well of your Lord. Think that He will help you fulfill your needs and suffice you, guard and protect you, and entrust you neither to creation nor to yourself. For He has informed us—Transcendent is He—that He is as good to His servant as His servant thinks Him to be.”

Remove from your heart the fear of poverty and the expectation that you will need other people. Beware to the extreme of worrying about provision and trust in your Lord's promise and His taking charge of you. He ﷺ says “Nothing walks the earth but that God provides for it.”<sup>138</sup> You are one of those who walk the earth, so occupy yourself with what He has commanded you rather than with what He has already guaranteed for you, for your Lord never forgets you. He has informed you that provision is with Him and commanded you to seek it from Him by acts of worship. He ﷺ says, “Seek provision from God, and worship Him, and be thankful to Him. To Him shall you return.”<sup>139</sup> Do you not see how He provides—Transcendent is He—for those who reject Him and worship other than Him? Will He then fail to provide for the believers who worship Him alone, when He provides for those who sin and disobey? Will He not provide for the obedient who remember and thank Him in abundance?

Know that there is no censure attached to moving outwardly in a legally permissible manner to seek provision. Censure, however, is deserved when the heart fails to remain tranquil, becomes anxious and fretful, and pursues illusions. It is indication of the ruin of the heart that a person should worry about his expected needs for a day that has yet to appear from non-existence, such as tomorrow or next month, that he says, “If this should run out, where

---

or A reference to the famous *Hadith Qudsi*, I am as My servant thinks of Me and I am with him when he remembers Me. . . (Bukhārī, *Sahih*, 7405)

shall more come from? If provision does not come in this manner, in what other manner can it come?"

As for renouncing secondary means<sup>01</sup> or employing them, these are two stations where God establishes whomsoever He wills of His servants. Therefore, he who is well established in the divestment of means, let him have powerful certainty and ample patience, and persevere in his acts of worship. As for he who is established in the employment of means, let him fear God in his means and rely upon Him and none else. Let him beware of occupying himself with means to the detriment of obedience to his Lord.

The disciple may have thoughts concerning provision, ostentatious behavior, and other such things. He is neither sinful nor deserving of blame so long as he dislikes them and strives to expel them from his heart.

[18] KEEPING THE COMPANY OF THE  
BEST OF PEOPLE; THE GOOD MANNERS OF  
THE DISCIPLE WITH HIS SHAYKH; THE  
ATTRIBUTES OF THE PERFECT SHAYKH

O disciple, you must take the greatest care to keep the company of the best people, and sit with the virtuous and the righteous. Search with utmost care for a good Shaykh, a man of guidance and good advice, who has knowledge of *Shari'a*, has traveled the Path of *tariqa*, and has tasted *haqiqa*.<sup>02</sup> A man in whom is joined perfection of mind, vastness of breast, wisdom in management, knowledge of the ranks of people, and the ability to discern

---

01 Secondary means or secondary causes refer to the means used by created beings to cause any given effect, like a fire to burn, or a knife to cut with. In this context, the reference is to created means used to obtain money or other forms of provision. The one primary cause of course is Divine power which is the real actor, so that to renounce secondary means is to depend solely on Divine power to fulfill all of one's needs. This is a transient spiritual state that some men of God pass through.

02 *Shari'a* is the Sacred Law. To practice it with excellence and effectiveness one must have received adequate knowledge and training, both of which constitute *tariqa*, the method that leads to inward purification. This method permits one to combat the lower tendencies of the soul so as to reach the state where the lights of *haqiqa*, or realization, begin to shine upon the heart of the seeker. Most of the writings of Imām al-Haddād are concerned with the second term of the triad, that is, the method.

the variations in their instincts, innate qualities, and states.<sup>01</sup> When you find him, surrender to him, give him command over all your affairs, and take his advice and suggestions in everything that concerns you.<sup>02</sup> Follow his example in everything he says or does, except in those things which are specific to his status as a Shaykh, for a Shaykh has to mix with people, speak to them gently and evenly, and draw the near and far among them to God, so all that pertains to these things you should leave to him. Never object, whether publicly or privately, to any behavior of his. Should a disturbing thought about him enter your heart strive to cast it out. If you do not succeed, speak to the Shaykh about it so that he can teach you how to rid yourself of it. You should also inform him of everything that occurs to you, especially concerning the Path.

Beware of obeying him publicly and when in his presence, then in secret disobeying him, for you can thus perish.

Do not seek to meet any Shaykh known to be a spiritual master unless you have your own Shaykh's permission. If he permits you, guard your heart and meet whomsoever you will. But if he does not, know that he has chosen what is best for you. Do not accuse him of being envious or jealous. God forbid that such may occur to God's people, His Elect.

Beware of asking the Shaykh for *karāmāt* or that he reveal to you that which you secretly think. Knowledge of the hidden belongs exclusively to God. The limit of a saint is that God should reveal to him only some of the hidden, some of the time. A disciple may enter the presence of his Shaykh wishing to be told his own thoughts, and the Shaykh may refrain from telling him, even though they might be unveiled to him. This is to guard his secret and hide his state, for they are — may God be pleased with them — the most careful of all people in guarding their secrets and the farthest from showing off by *karāmāt* and supernatural events, even when given mastery over them. Most *karāmāt* manifesting in saints do not happen by choice. When any such event does occur, those who witness it are asked not to divulge what they have witnessed until the Shaykh has left this world. Saints, however, will sometimes openly bring about such events when there is greater benefit in doing so than in keeping them hidden.

---

01 Here and in the previous sentence are spelled out the qualifications one should look for in a spiritual master before committing oneself to him.

02 See Translator's Appendix Two.

Know that a perfect Shaykh is one who benefits the disciple through his spiritual power,<sup>o1</sup> his behavior, and his words. He protects him whether in his presence or out of it.<sup>o2</sup>

If the disciple is physically far from his Shaykh, he must seek from him general guidelines as to what he should and should not do.

The most harmful thing to the disciple is a change in his Shaykh's feelings toward him. If this happens, then even were the shaykhs of the East and the West to unite to improve him they would never succeed; not until his own Shaykh becomes pleased with him again.

Know that a disciple in search of a Shaykh should not surrender command over himself to anyone said to be a Shaykh and a guide on the path until he comes to know that such a one is worthy of this description and until he can accept him wholeheartedly. Similarly, if a disciple goes to a Shaykh asking to be taken on the Path, he should not be permitted to enter it until his sincerity has been tested, as well as the extent to which he truly thirsts for someone to guide him to his Lord.

All this relates to the Shaykh of *taḥkīm*.<sup>o3</sup> It is a condition that the disciple should remain with him like a dead body in the hands of he who is washing it for burial, or like a child with its mother. This does not apply to the Shaykh of *tabarruk*.<sup>o4</sup> If the disciple's intention is to gather *baraka* and not hand over command over his affairs, then the more shaykhs he meets the better.

A disciple who has not succeeded in finding a Shaykh should persevere

- 
- o1 Spiritual power (*himma*) is the Shaykh's ability to influence his disciple's heart either by transmitting to him some of the lights and knowledge he has attained or raising the disciple's spiritual resolution, concentration, and eagerness for the Path to God.
- o2 These are the more essential qualifications for a spiritual master without which he will be an imperfect, not a perfect Shaykh. He needs to be able to see the soul of his disciple to identify its imperfections and prescribe the appropriate remedies. Some of these he will instruct the disciple to implement and others he must be able to carry out by means of his spiritual power. He must be able to follow his disciple's progress however geographically remote he may be and be able to intervene at a distance when necessary.
- o3 The Shaykh of *taḥkīm* is the spiritual master in the fullest meaning of the word. He is the one who has power of decision over the disciple's outward and inward religious affairs.
- o4 The Shaykh of *tabarruk* is the saint one visits to receive some of the radiation of his *baraka* and to benefit from his prayers, knowing that they are accepted by God.



in resolutely striving to do so. He should turn to God in total sincerity and need, and ask Him to give him a guide. He will be answered by the One who answers those in desperate need; He will send him a servant of His to take him by the hand.

A disciple may be searching for a Shaykh thinking that he is without one, while in actual fact a Shaykh he has never seen has been rearing and teaching him by directing his gaze and concern toward him, the disciple remaining unaware. In reality, the most vital factor is sincerity.<sup>01</sup> Real Shaykhs are there, but, "Transcendent is He Who has made the evidence that guides to His saints part of the evidence that guides to Him, and does not allow anyone to reach them except those He wishes to make reach Him."<sup>02</sup>

If you want something from your Shaykh, or if you have a question to ask, do not refrain out of awe and respect. Ask once, twice and thrice.<sup>03</sup> Do not think that it is courteous to refrain from asking, unless of course the Shaykh himself indicates that you should remain silent and leave this question, in which case you must obey.

If the Shaykh prevents you from doing something, or shows preference to someone else, beware of thinking ill of him. Be convinced that he has done what is best for you and most beneficial. If you do something wrong which angers your Shaykh, be quick to apologize until he again becomes pleased with you. If you suspect a change in the Shaykh's feeling toward you, if for instance you find that he does not smile at you as much as he usually does, you must tell him of your apprehension, for it may be due to something you did, in which case you can repent. Or it may be that you only imagined the Shaykh to have changed towards you and this was but a thought cast into your heart by the Devil so as to distress you, in which case when you find out that the Shaykh is pleased with you your heart will regain its peace. This cannot happen if, rather than talking about it, you keep quiet in the knowledge that you have done nothing wrong.

When you see a disciple, who is full of respect and awe for his Shaykh,

---

01 This means that God never abandons a seeker with sufficient sincerity to his own devices; He always leads him to a worthy master.

02 This is one of the Hikam of Ibn 'Aṭṭā'illah and means that when God wants to guide you to Him He will guide you to one of His saints and reveal to you his status so that you will accept him as a master capable of leading you to Him.

03 It goes without saying that asking questions should be done tactfully with due consideration for time and circumstance.

who believes in him and obeys him fully, outwardly and inwardly, and behaves towards him with the appropriate good manners, such a disciple will inevitably inherit his secret or part of it should he survive him.<sup>61</sup>

## CONCLUSION

### *The Attributes of the Sincere Disciple and How He Should Behave*

A certain Knower—may God be pleased with him and make us benefit from him—once said, “A disciple is not really one until he is able to find in the Qur’ān everything that he wants, recognizes the difference between diminution and increase, has become independent of the servants by the grace of the Lord, and he regards gold and dust as equal.”

A disciple is one who observes the limits, keeps his promises, is content with what he has, and is patient when deprived.

A disciple is one who is thankful in prosperity, patiently endures afflictions and is content with the bitter decrees, praises his Lord in ease and in hardship, and remains true to Him in private and in public.

A disciple is one who is not enslaved by other than God, nor by events; he is one who is neither vanquished by his appetites, nor dominated by his habits. His words are invocation and wisdom, his silence reflection and heeding examples. His actions precede his words and are proof of his knowledge. His inner garment is reverence and gravity, his cloak humility and modesty. He follows truth and prefers it, and rejects falsehood and denounces it. He loves the best of people and is their ally, and he detests evil people and is their enemy. In dealing with him he proves better than what is said about him, and in keeping his company he proves better than his reputation. He helps others abundantly, but his own demands are few. He remains far from frivolousness, is honest and trustworthy. He neither lies nor betrays, and is neither a miser nor a coward. He neither insults nor curses, is not concerned with what is not his share, and is not parsimonious

---


61 The secret meant here is part of the spiritual bond between the saint and his Lord. A spiritual master may have thousands of disciples, many of which will reach God through him, so that the secrets he may bequeath to his children and successors on leaving this earth are not a necessity for reaching the end of the Path, rather they are extra lights and powers contributing to the flowering of sainthood.

with what is. What is within him is good, so are his intentions, and there is no evil in him. He is very resolute in drawing nearer to his Lord, disdainful of this world, and does not repeat his errors. Whether he acts or refrains from acting, he is not driven by his appetites. Loyalty and chivalry are his companions, modesty and manliness his allies. He exacts everyone's rights from himself, but never seeks to exact his rights from anyone. When he is given, he thanks, and when withheld from he is patient. When he commits an injustice, he repents and asks for forgiveness. When an injustice is committed against him, he forgives and pardons.

He prefers to remain unknown and hidden, and dislikes prominence and fame. He does not talk of what does not concern him, and his heart is saddened by his shortcomings. He accepts no compromise in religious matters and does not please people by incurring the displeasure of the Lord of the worlds.

He finds solace in isolation and loneliness, but estrangement in mixing with people. Whenever you meet him, you find him engaged in acts of goodness or acquiring knowledge. He is a person from whom people expect goodness and do not fear evil. He does not repay harm with harm, nor does he shun those who shun him. He is like a palm tree, throwing tender dates at you when you throw stones at it; like soil on which filth is thrown, but out of which grow beautiful things.

The light of his truthfulness shines outwardly and what shows on his face betrays what is hidden inwardly. He strives and aspires to please his Lord and is eager and careful to follow His Messenger, His Chosen and Beloved, whom he should take as example in all his affairs and follow in his character, behavior, and speech, in compliance with the commands of his Great Lord in His Noble Book, Take what the Messenger has brought to you and refrain from what he has forbidden you.<sup>140</sup> You have in the Messenger of God a good example for whoever has hope in God and the Last Day and remembers God in abundance.<sup>141</sup> The one who obeys the Messenger obeys God. Those who give allegiance to you are giving allegiance to God.<sup>142</sup> Say, 'If you love God, follow me and God will love you and forgive your sins.' God is Forgiving, Compassionate.<sup>143</sup> Let those who contravene his commands beware lest they become afflicted or stricken by a painful torment.<sup>144</sup>

Thus, will you see the disciple extremely careful in following his Prophet  obeying the command of his Lord, aspiring to the generous Promise,

and fleeing the threat of suffering mentioned in those verses we have just quoted and in others we left out but which carry the same meaning: good tidings of utmost success for the followers of the Messenger, and warnings of utmost shame and disgrace to those who disobey him!

O God! We ask You by Your being God and there being no God but You—the Affectionate, the Bountiful, the Designer of the heavens and the earth, the Lord of Majesty and Generosity—to confer on us perfection in following Your servant and Messenger, our Master Muḥammad ﷺ in his character, behavior, and words, outwardly and inwardly. Make us live and die according to this, and by Your mercy, O Most Merciful! God, our Lord, to You belongs abundant and fragrant praise, full of blessings as befits the majesty of Your Countenance and the magnitude of Your sovereignty. “Transcendent are You, we have no knowledge save that which You taught us. You are the Knowing, the Wise.”<sup>45</sup> There is no God but You. Transcendent are You! I have been among the unjust.”<sup>46</sup>

This treatise is now complete. It is guidance for the disciple to whom firmness, support, and proper direction are granted by his Lord, the Glorious.

It was dictated—may God be praised—in seven or eight nights of *Ramadān* of the year 1071 of the emigration of the Prophet, may the best of God’s blessings and peace be upon him. And praise belongs to God, Lord of the worlds.



# *The Book of Aphorisms*

---

*Kitāb al-Ḥikam*

IMAM ʿABDALLAH

IBN ʿALAWI AL-ḤADDĀD





## Introduction

Imām ‘Abdallāh ibn ‘Alawī al-Haddād ؒ once said, “When knowledge is received by the heart it becomes light, but when received by the ego it becomes fire.” We can understand from this that as he advances along the path, and his heart becomes more receptive while his ego becomes more subdued, the disciple becomes more capable of assimilating the profound wisdom contained in the synthetic utterances of the masters as well as in their poetry. This synthetic quality has its prototype in the Qur’ān, followed by the *ḥadīth* of the Prophet ﷺ who had said of himself, “*I have been given conciseness of speech.*”<sup>17</sup> With meditation, such texts unfold into a rich tapestry of meaning, allowing each heart to receive its particular needs of the moment. The utterances of the masters are likely to strike a deeper chord and resonate more powerfully when the state of the recipient is to some extent akin to that of the speaker. The Imām also said, “The movement of spiritual disciples toward God resembles that of those walking on foot, while that of travelers resembles that of those who ride on swift horses, that of Gnostics that of birds that fly in the air, and that of lovers that of dazzling lightning.” Thus, the more earnest the person’s flight to his Lord, the more profoundly he penetrates the depths of the Qur’ān, *Sunna*, and utterances of the masters.

As in his other works, the Imām is most concerned in his aphorisms with the middle element of the triad: *Shari’a*, *Ṭariqa*, *Ḥaqīqa*. Although he repeatedly stated that his rank and spiritual state qualified him to teach *Ḥaqīqa* as no other contemporary saint could, the actual conditions of his times, which included the receptivity of the students as well as the scarcity of the teachers of *Ṭariqa*, forced him to shoulder the task of teaching the



principles and subtleties of the method or technique of the path rather than teaching the higher sciences of reality.

The Arabic of the Imām's utterances is crisp, often rhymed, and often based on a play of words, none of which can be rendered adequately in English, so the translation is even farther away from the original than previous translations of the Imām's works which were written in ordinary prose. With this in mind, we made little attempt to retain a flavor we knew would inevitably escape us and were more concerned to preserve the meanings as we understood them.

The commentary of Shaykh Muḥammad Ḥayāt al-Sindī was evidently not intended to be exhaustive, but rather to provide insights into possible avenues of interpretation, leaving it to the reader to explore them further. The Shaykh lived in Madina and met with Imām al-Ḥaddād's son Ḥasan when he came for *hajj* and also with many of the Imām's disciples, among whom one of the most prominent was Imām 'Umar ibn 'Abdal-Raḥmān al-Bār. The Shaykh is thought to have died in Madina in the month of Rabi' al-Ākhir of the year 1162 of the *Hijra*.

The following is a preface by the author written at a time when he intended to make the aphorisms a separate book. Later on, when he decided to include them with his correspondence, counsels, and poems in a single collection with a single introduction, this preface was left out. Decades later, however, each of these was printed as a separate volume, and the current publisher of the Imām's books, having come upon this preface, decided to include it in the separate Book of Aphorisms as originally intended.



## *Author's Preface*

In the Name of God, Most Merciful and Compassionate

*They cried, "Transcendent are You! We have no knowledge save that which You taught us, You are the Omniscient, the Wise".<sup>148</sup>*

Praise belongs to God, the Affectionate, the Liberal, whose grants and favors are constant, Whose gifts are too free to ever be confined to certain times or places or restricted to certain persons, Who transcends restrictions to His Essence, Attributes, and Acts. Transcendent is He; "each day He attends to something different."<sup>149</sup>

I praise and thank Him with the praises of one who is immersed in His benevolence, who confesses to his incapacity to ever thank Him, nor to ascribe to Him that which His rank deserves, even though he does his utmost to do so.

May His blessings and peace be upon the best of His creation, he who was sent with the best of all religions, our lord and master Muḥammad, his family and Companions, in every single instant.

To proceed: With God's help, I have decided, having asked my Lord for permission, to record those words, aphorisms and verses of poetry which come to me in the course of reminding and discoursing, in the desire that readers profit from them in this world and the Next. I have often intended this, but that intention was not carried through, nor the decision implemented, the reason being, first of all, the decrees of destiny, then one's low opinion of oneself, and lastly my emphasizing memorization and teaching. Then I noticed that I began to forget much of that and only little remained, and sometimes I still needed what had been forgotten. Then I came upon

certain writings of Shaykh Ibn 'Arabī, the gist of which is that near the end of one's quest, a person receives certain inspirations which he should carefully preserve, for he will need them later on, and they come for that very purpose. That is when I became determined to record whatever had come to mind, adding to that all that would come subsequently, God willing, depending on God, relying upon Him, desirous of what is with Him, seeking sanctuary with Him, "and he who seeks sanctuary with God, he has been guided to a straight path."<sup>150</sup>

A brother of ours saw what we have written down here and remarked that it contains certain resemblances, sometimes in form and sometimes in meaning, to the expressions of someone else. I wish to make it clear to him that this is merely coincidental, for it is no secret that to quote someone without attributing the quotation to him is nothing but theft and false appropriation, both of which would be quite reprehensible.

It is now time to begin; may God make our intention good and our hearts pure.



## *Introduction*

by Shaykh Muḥammad Ḥayāt al-Sindī

In the Name of God, Most Merciful and Compassionate.

May God's blessings and peace be upon our master Muḥammad, his family, and his companions.

May God be praised, Who bestowed upon us countless graces, and may His blessings and peace be upon His Beloved, whom He favored beyond all limits, and upon his family, his Companions, and his community, who attain by his *baraka* their farthest hopes.

To proceed: Says the one needy for his Able Rich Lord, Muḥammad Ḥayāt, the Sindī, the Madanī, may God pardon him: This is a small effort at explaining the *Hikam* of the pole of all the worlds, the peerless, the unique man of the time, the possessor of knowledge and gnosis, the venerable *Sayyid* 'Abdallāh ibn 'Alawī al-Ḥaddād Bā-'Alawī, may God unite us with him and his Ancestor ﷺ in the highest rooms of paradise.

My rank compared with his is as that of the sparrow compared with the hawk, or that of the fox compared with of the lion. I am unworthy to explain his lofty words. However, I have dared to intrude, in the hope that God ﷻ may grant me some of that which He has granted him.





[1] In relation to the Real, created beings cannot be but within one of two circles, either the circle of mercy, or the circle of wisdom. He who is in the circle of mercy today, tomorrow will be in the circle of favor. And he who is in the circle of wisdom today, tomorrow will be in the circle of justice.

*Created beings*, who are but manifestations of the attributes of the Real, *in relation to the Real*, are *within one of two circles*. They are either in *the circle of mercy*, or in *the circle of wisdom*. *He who is today*, which is the time when what was preordained in eternity is appearing, *in the circle of Mercy*, meaning that God 卐 confers upon him success in doing what pleases Him and avoiding what displeases Him, inwardly and outwardly, *will be tomorrow*, at the time when deeds shall be repaid, *in the circle of favor*, for what the Generous will give him as recompense for his deeds is, in reality, from his favor and munificence, without him being deserving of it by virtue of his deeds—for are his deeds indeed his? Who is he to deserve to be recompensed? It is but the gift of the Bestower of Gifts. *He who is in the circle of wisdom today will be tomorrow*, on Resurrection Day, *in the circle of justice*, for God's chastisement of sinners is justice, not injustice. Your Lord is not unjust to the servants.<sup>15</sup>

The explanation of this is that God 卐 eternally possesses attributes of mercy, such as generosity, liberality, compassion, gentleness, benevolence, as well as attributes of wrath, such as coercion, leading astray, and vengeance. He divides His creation into two kinds, the destiny of some He causes to manifest predominantly His attributes of mercy, although they are not entirely lacking in wisdom and justice; the destiny of others He causes to manifest predominantly His wrathful attributes and His wisdom, although they are not entirely lacking in the manifestations of mercy and

benevolence. Then He brings them out of the void of nothingness into the space of existence and makes easy for each group that which He has destined them for. Then, when He brings them to Judgment Day, He places those of the circle of mercy, by His grace, in favors innumerable, and those of the circle of wisdom, by His justice, in trials unending. Therefore, the one for whom He facilitates good let him thank none other than Him, whereas he who is tried with evil, let him blame only himself.



[2] He who puts himself in relation to his Lord, as his own slave is in relation to him, he has left no part of perfection unattained.

*He has left no part of perfection unattained*, of that perfection that all people of servitude ought to possess, *he who puts himself, in relation to his Lord, as his own slave is in relation to him*. This is attained by knowing that just as he likes that his slave, who is a human being similar to himself, obeys him to perfection, seeks his good pleasure, is humble to the extreme and submissive before him, so will God the Formidable like the same of him. Thus, bearing in mind that he is the one who is lowly and God is the One who is Majestic, let him strive to please and satisfy Him. Then, just as he dislikes of his slave any disobedience at all in whatever he either commands or forbids him to do, and just as he dislikes willfulness, arrogance, and selfishness in him, so will God the Compeller dislike of him such things. Therefore, let him strive to avoid all that He dislikes. This is the perfect human being; all others are of no consequence. Transcendent is He who made male and female slaves the greatest sign enjoining obedience to Him and forbidding rebellion against Him. Only those possessed of reason heed the lesson.



[3] The sleeper can be aroused and the distracted can be reminded. He who profits nothing from reminding or arousing is dead. Advice profits only those whose hearts are open to it. *Only those remember who are willing to repent.*<sup>152</sup>

*The sleeper*, who lives in disregard of God, *can be aroused*. He can be told that this is his state, and then it can be stressed to him how disgraceful this condition really is. He can then be exhorted to turn back to Him and it can be stressed to him how praiseworthy that would be. *The distracted*, who is forgetful of God, *can be reminded* of his forgetfulness. It can be pointed out to him how disgraceful this is and the desire can be aroused in him to remember God and draw nearer to Him. *He who derives no benefit* and is unable to profit *from either reminding or arousing is dead*. God ﷻ says, 'You cannot make the dead hear you'.<sup>151</sup> Therefore, it is futile to preoccupy oneself with trying to awaken such a one from his habitual forgetfulness and remind him. *Advice profits only he whose heart accepts it*, for that is where it is received and the recipient should attend to it with concentration, accept it willingly, learn it, then strive to act accordingly. *Only those remember* when they receive it, *who are willing to repent* and wish to return to their Lord. Then they eagerly accept it and act on it, that through it they may reach their Lord. It profits not those who turn away and disregard it. The likeness of the first, [who accept], is that of fertile soil, while that of the second, [who disregard it], is like smooth hard rock—then rain falls upon both.



[4] How can there be among the believers those who  
please created beings at the cost of displeasing the Lord  
of the worlds?

*How can there be among believers*, meaning by that complete believers who believe in God's Majesty and Beauty, make Him their only aim and only beloved, hope only for His good, and fear only His force, *those who please*, with their words, deeds, and states, *created beings*, who have no power to harm or benefit their own selves, let alone others, *at the cost of angering the Lord of Worlds*, whose wrath is the ultimate and most serious catastrophe? Whoever angers Him, He will take him by the neck and cast him into the pit of His vengeance. Had they been true believers they would have pleased Him with whatever pleases Him and cared nothing for either the anger or pleasure of others. Who, other than Him, can possibly be worthy of pleasing at the cost of angering Him? Only one whose heart is blind can behave so.





- [5] A habit, when well established, overrides all else. So long as formality persists, no intimacy can exist.

*A habit*, which is to repeat the same act over and over, whether it be beneficial or harmful, *when well established* in him who does it, *overrides all else*, which is everything that had been in its place before. When good becomes habitual, it overrides evil, and the opposite also holds true. When the *Sunna* becomes habitual, it overrides the innovation, and the opposite is also true. He whose habit it is to strive vigorously in the worship of his Able Lord, will overcome neglect, and the opposite is also true. Therefore, a human being should make drawing nearer to the All-Merciful through what pleases Him his habit. It will thus override his remoteness from Him. He should not become accustomed to remoteness from Him through what displeases Him, for it will abolish his drawing nearer.

*So long as there is formalism*, which is to behave with affectation toward brothers, thus overburdening oneself, *no intimacy can exist* among those who behave thus toward each other, for it is soon disrupted. Therefore, one should neither treat his brother with tiresome formalism, nor demand of him that which would cause him hardship. This also indicates that intimacy with God, the comfort of His contemplation, and the pleasure of drawing nearer to Him will not last until obedience ceases to become a burden, as it is rendered easier and so becomes the most pleasurable of things.



- [6] Those who are incapable of using a little money to stave off poverty will also find themselves incapable of being enriched by a large amount of it. Similarly, those who cannot profit from a little knowledge are even less likely to profit from much

*He who is incapable of staving off poverty with a little money*, one who is incapable of securing his necessities, for necessities are very few, with that which should suffice for his clothing, food, dwelling, and the fulfillment of his duties, should know that a human being's essential requirements are a

small piece of bread to allay hunger, a mouthful of water to allay thirst, a garment to cover his body, and a house to protect him from heat and cold. Such a man *will find himself incapable of being enriched by a large amount of it*. To be rich means not to lack those things which one's ego desires. The more money a person has the more his desires. They will thus never be fulfilled until death takes him by the neck to drag him to the pit, stripped of all that he had amassed, leaving it to those who will enjoy what he has toiled for, even as he is being asked to account for it in his grave. *Similarly, he who cannot profit from a little knowledge*, which is to know that obeying God will bring about recompense from Him, while disobeying Him will bring about His punishment and wrath. One who benefits from this knowledge by acting on it, doing what he has learned of His obedience for His ﷻ sake and refraining also for His ﷻ sake, from what he has learned of disobedience to Him, [such a one] *is even less likely to profit from more [than that]*. He is like a donkey carrying books, even if he travels extensively to acquire this knowledge, God will remove him farther from Him and will be more insistent on punishing him. Were it not for his carrying this knowledge, He might even have turned him into a pig or a donkey. We ask God, the Forgiver, for His protection from an increase in our rebellion and transgression despite the abundance of our knowledge.



[7] The one who finds repugnant in his brother things  
in which he has no choice is but quarreling with fate.

*He is but quarreling with fate*, being that fate is that which was preordained by the Invincible, who causes things to happen as He, the Compeller, wishes. *The one who finds repugnant in his brother in Islam that in which he has no choice* and no power to avoid. That which a human being does can either be an act of obedience or one leading up to it, an act of disobedience or one leading up to it, or neither this nor that, nor that which leads up to them. To find repugnant the abandonment of obedience or what leads to it, and the commission of sins and what leads to them, is incumbent according to the Law and there is no quarreling with fate in that. He who has decreed these is also He who has enjoined people to find them repugnant. To find repugnant what is other than these is quarreling with fate, for things will

run according to fate, and He who has decreed them did not enjoin people to find them repugnant. He who quarrels with fate is objecting to [the decrees] of the Wise, the Invincible.



[8] Contentment with fate dispels opposition to God, but does not affect seeking what should be sought, or fleeing from that from which one should flee.

*Contentment with fate* which originates with the Wise, the Knower, who commands people to obey Him and forbids them to disobey, *dispels opposition to God* who acts in His kingdom as He wishes by His wisdom. How can dust object to the Lord of Lords? *It leaves* [to the human being] *seeking what should be sought*, which is that which draws one nearer to Him. He to whom this is given should thank his Lord for His favor. [It also leaves] *fleeing from that which one should flee*, which is that which removes one farther away from Him. He who is tried with abandoning that which he should be seeking and committing that which he should be avoiding, let him blame only himself and not use Divine predestination as justification, for to God belongs the ultimate argument. Had He wished, He would have guided them all.



[9] The only things of this world deemed praiseworthy are those which lead either to doing good or to avoiding evil. And the things of this world deemed permissible are those which neither lead to neglecting obligations nor committing forbidden things. And the things of this world deemed blameworthy, according to the Book and *Sunna*, are those which cause one either to abandon an obligation or commit a sin.

*The only things of this world deemed praiseworthy*, as in the Prophet's ﷺ saying, "*A fine thing good money is for a good man*,"<sup>14</sup> *are those which lead* human beings *either to doing good*, by giving *zakāt*, donating in charity, spending in the way of God, *ḥajj*, *awqāf*, and so on, *or to avoiding evil* such as stealing,

usurpation, robbery, illegal appropriation, or staving off the disbelievers. And there is that in the world which is deemed permissible, as in His ﷺ saying, "Eat and drink."<sup>155</sup> *And the things of this world deemed permissible are those which neither lead to neglecting obligations* such as monetary or physical acts of worship, or activities that join both, *nor to committing forbidden things* such as squandering money, extravagance, or spending on sinful acts. One should enjoy what God has made licit for him, without neglecting what He has made obligatory, nor committing what He has forbidden. The world is disparaged in the Book in such as His ﷺ saying, "Your wealth and your children are but temptations,"<sup>156</sup> as well as in the *Sunna*, such as in his ﷺ saying, "The world is accursed and accursed is what it contains, except for the Remembrance of God and that which leads up to it."<sup>157</sup> This refers to the things *which cause one either to abandon an obligation or to commit a sin*. To sum up, the world is inherently neither praiseworthy nor blameworthy, it becomes only so according to its consequences. When it leads to good deeds, it is praiseworthy and of excellent assistance to the Muslim in both his worldly and religious affairs, but when it leads to evil deeds, it is blameworthy and an evil assistance it becomes. Finally, when it leads to neither good nor evil, it is neither to be praised, nor disparaged, rather it becomes merely permissible.



[10] For some people a hint is sufficient and no explanations are necessary. Others need explicit explanations, gently and kindly given. For others still, only harsh reprimands will do. He who profits from none of those is a devil. All four kinds have their likeness from among the animals. The first is like a tame riding beast that requires neither bridle nor whip. The second is like one that needs a bridle but no whip. The third is like one that behaves appropriately only when whipped and scolded. The fourth is like one that becomes even more recalcitrant with the bridle or whip.

*For some people* who vary in their ability to understand, *a hint is sufficient* to grasp the meaning, since their intelligence and ability to understand are good,

*and no explanations are necessary. Others, because their understanding is feeble, need explicit explanations to clarify what is meant, gently and kindly given, so that they will be receptive. Gentleness is attractive and thus conducive to understanding, while severity is repulsive and likely to drive people away, thus closing the door to understanding. God ﷻ said to His ﷻ Beloved, "Had you been stern and coarse hearted, they would have dispersed from around you."<sup>158</sup> For others still, only harsh reprimands will do, since their understanding is weak, their hearts hard, and their character coarse, such that only harshness and severity may cause their hearts to soften and their minds to accept good advice. A rock can be broken only with steel and smelted only by fire. God ﷻ says, "O Prophet, strive against the disbelievers and the hypocrites and be stern with them."<sup>159</sup> He who profits from none of those, whose heart softens neither in response to a severe and stern attitude, nor is it attracted to good by the aforementioned gentleness, he is a devil. All four kinds have their likeness among the animals. The first kind, for whom allusion suffices to make him understand what is required and to move toward his Lord, is like a tame obedient riding beast that requires neither the control of a bridle nor the lash of a whip, for its tame but noble disposition makes it always give its best. The second kind, who needs explicit instructions gently given, is like one that needs a bridle but no whip since it is also tame and noble, but not to the same extent, such that its rider will need to exert some effort with it. The third kind, who requires severity, is like one that behaves appropriately toward its rider only when whipped and scolded, for it is rebellious, hard, and requires forceful handling. The fourth kind, with whom neither of the latter are of any avail, is like one that is wild and evil and becomes even more recalcitrant when bridle and whip are used. It never obeys he who rides or leads it, and he is ever exerting himself with her but to no avail.*



[11] If you wish to be free, abandon every matter which if you were not to abandon it by choice you would have to by coercion.

*If you wish to be free from servitude to creation, fully devoted to He who forgives, then abandon every matter that does not draw you nearer to your Lord, which if you were not to abandon it by choice, you would have to by coercion.*

These are the affairs of this world, its companions and appetites, for he who is preoccupied with them is a servant to his whims and one who has turned away from his Lord. He who abandons them by choice and inclines to the path of he who created them is a servant of He who gave them to him in the first place. All honor lies in servitude to Him, whereas all abasement lies in servitude to other than Him.



[12] The value of a thing can be known in no better way than by its opposite. Nothing is of more comfort to the afflicted person than to remember others who are similarly afflicted.

*The value of a thing can be known in no better way than by its opposite.* Only he knows the true value of being close to the Lord, one who was pushed away after having tasted the pleasure of it only he knows the true value of health who was afflicted by sickness; only he knows the true value of wealth who was afflicted with poverty, and so on. God often teaches His servants the value of His favors by withdrawing them and then afflicting them with their opposites. *Nothing is of more comfort to the afflicted person than to remember others who are similarly afflicted*, because difficulties are easier to bear when shared by everyone, and they are harder to bear when one is singled out by them.



[13] He who is too occupied with his duty to his Lord to attend to his duties to himself and his brethren is a servant of the Presence. He who is too occupied with duties to himself to attend to his Lord and his brethren is a servant of passions. He who is too occupied with his duties to his brethren to attend to those to his Lord and to himself is a servant of the ambition for leadership. He who is too occupied with his duties to his Lord and his brethren to attend to himself is in possession of the Legacy.

*He who is too occupied with his duty to his Lord, being too absorbed in His contemplation, to attend to his duties to himself and to his brethren, since he has extinguished himself in his Beloved and no longer sees them, is a servant of the Presence.* He is so immersed in gnosis that no part of him is left to attend to other than God. In this state it is excusable if he fails to fulfill his duties to his own self and to his brethren, for he is bereft of all awareness save that of the Known One.

*He who is too occupied with his duties to his own self, that is, his ego, which is by nature attracted to pleasures and appetites, fluttering around the valleys of indiscretions, to attend to his Lord and his brethren, is a servant of passions.* He comes under His ﷻ saying, "Have you seen he who has taken his passion for a god?"<sup>160</sup> And His ﷻ saying, "Those are like cattle, they are even more astray."<sup>161</sup>

*He who is too occupied with his duties to his brethren to attend to those to his Lord and to himself is a servant of the ambition for leadership* in this world; he is bereft of other-worldly leadership, his transaction will bring him nothing but loss, and he is but a worshipper of his own self.

*He who is too occupied with his duties to his Lord and his brethren to attend to himself is in possession of the Legacy of the Prophet ﷺ.* To him refers His ﷻ saying, "They prefer others to their own selves even though they are in need."<sup>162</sup>

He who is able to fulfill all his duties without being so occupied with some that he neglects others, he is complete.



[14] How strange is he who chases after this world when he neither knows what of it he will be able acquire, nor whether he will be able to profit from whatever he has acquired, while on the other hand is quite certain that he will have to leave it and depart.

*How strange is he who chases after this world, for this world is worth less than a mosquito's wing in the sight of its Creator, Who, since He created it, never gave it a second glance. It is evanescent, swiftly perishable, short-lived, and full of afflictions and difficulties. When he neither knows what of it he will be able to acquire, as he may or may not succeed in acquiring what*

there is to be acquired, *nor whether he will be able to profit from whatever he has acquired*, for how many have succeeded in acquiring the things they desired but were unable to enjoy them? A human being will profit only from what is in his assigned lot. How many have toiled to amass money, only for others to enjoy it? How strange is he who fails to seek the Hereafter while knowing for certain that it is better and longer lasting, and that only his works will profit him then, provided he dies a believer. *On the other hand he is quite certain that he will have to leave it and depart*, for everyone knows for certain that they are mortal and that death is inevitable, yet this world so blinds the sights of those who are passionately in love with it that they seek nothing else, are preoccupied with nothing else and hasten to none else.



[15] The one who becomes accustomed to breaking his resolutions will find himself unable to achieve any gains.

*The one who becomes accustomed to breaking his resolutions*, who becomes accustomed to sin, to abandoning precautions and circumspection, *will find himself unable to achieve any gains*, and the gains in question include spiritual pleasures, Lordly gnosis, favors of the All-Merciful, Divine gifts, and other more worldly rewards. He is likely to be afflicted with the worst of difficulties, following his being deprived of the worthiest of favors. The fool is he who exchanges a pearl for an ant.



[16] When your ego invites you to a passionate desire, beware of saying, "I shall grant it its desire just this once to free the heart from such demands." For if you do that, it will only incite you to a greater one.

*When your ego*, which by its nature is lustful, tricky, and treacherous, *invites you to a passionate desire* and insists on your gratifying it, *beware of saying* in your heart, "*I shall grant it its desire just this once to free the heart* which it is distracting and cutting off from its Lord, *from such demands*," for only then will it be free of its insistence. *For if you do that* and allow it free rein, *it will only incite you to a greater one* and will persist in doing so until it sends



you tumbling down in the pit of its pleasures and drowns you in the mire of its whims. Have you not heard the words of the Prophet ﷺ "He who grazes near the forbidden area risks straying into it."<sup>63</sup> How many has this treacherous one slain with her enticements? So beware of it that it may not corrupt you with its ruses.



[17] A servant will never attain the reality of faith until he comes to find in his dealings with the Real the same pleasure and sweetness that those who have passionate desires find in gratifying them.

*A servant will never attain the reality of faith, which is of many degrees, until he comes to find in his dealings with the Real, which are his acts of obedience and efforts to draw nearer to Him, the same pleasure and sweetness in his spiritual pleasures and experiences of the heart that those who have passionate desires find in gratifying them.* This is only the lowest degree of experiencing the reality of faith. The spiritual pleasures experienced by those who are perfect in their dealings with God ﷻ are higher, more majestic, complete, and profound. These are known only to those who have experienced them. Had the veiled been allowed to experience them they would have fought each other over them.



[18] The difficulty in keeping a secret is less than the difficulty of worrying about its being divulged by those with whom you might share it.

*The difficulty which consists in the effort expended in keeping a secret, which the heart is always inclined to divulge, and rests only after revealing it, is less than the difficulty of worrying about its being divulged by those with whom you might share it.* Therefore, do not reveal your secrets to anyone, for how many of those who revealed a secret to others were led thereby to their ruin, or loss, or regrets when it is too late.



[19] The most telling proof of the perfection of a man's intellect is his praising his peers. The most telling proof of his humility is his acceptance of being relegated to an inferior position in a situation where he deserves to be given priority. And the most telling proof of his sincerity is his lack of concern whenever he antagonizes others for the sake of the truth.

*The most telling proof of the perfection of a man's intellect* provided he does it truthfully without hypocrisy *is his praising his peers* who are his contemporaries in his era, or area, or city. People with grand egos are naturally hostile to one another, and are thus prone to slander others and reveal their shortcomings, while passing over in silence their good qualities. Rarely is one safe from his peers. Therefore, he who praises his peers shows himself to be intelligent, aware of the realities of things, certain that all good is in God's hand to be given to whomsoever He will, and that it is He who chose to grant His favors to his contemporaries, who are in reality his brothers, and the sincere brother is one who rejoices for the favors received by his brother. *The most telling proof of his humility* before God ﷻ *is his acceptance of being relegated to an inferior position*, without affectation, really seeing himself as undeserving in a situation where he deserves to be given priority, such as gatherings, meetings, and assemblies. This can only be done by one who thinks of himself as the lowest of the low and thinks of others as being more worthy and more respectable. *The most telling proof of his sincerity* in his servitude to his Lord is *his lack of concern whenever he antagonizes others for the sake of the truth*, for what are others in relation to God ﷻ that he may anger Him for their sake? Only he would do that who is blind of heart, bereft of reason, and ignorant of his Lord.



[20] This world is one of two things to which there is no third, the love of wealth and the love of preeminence. Those who renounce both wealth and preeminence are True Saints [*Siddiqūn*]. Those who renounce wealth but not preeminence are ostentatious. Those who renounce preeminence but love wealth are vile. As for those who

love both wealth and preeminence, the least of their punishment is to be deprived of both.

Most of *this world* which distracts people from God ﷻ and prevents them from reaching the high degrees of Paradise, is one of two things to which there is no equal third, the love of wealth which human beings are naturally fond of and can never have enough of—save those upon whom God has mercy—so that many become even more greedy the more their wealth increases, and the love of preeminence in the sight of others, which thing is more obvious in kings, rulers, governors, and people in high positions. *Those who renounce both wealth and preeminence* because they are more desirous of what God ﷻ has and of drawing nearer to Him are *True Saints [Siddiqūn]*. Such are those whose outward and inward have been purified from other than God ﷻ and contain only Him. *Those who renounce wealth but not preeminence are ostentatious*, for they will have renounced wealth only to attract the hearts of people to themselves. *Those who renounce preeminence but love wealth are vile*. *As for those who love both wealth and preeminence, the least of their punishment is to be deprived of both.*



[21] Lands are of three kinds: A land which when irrigated produces grass and pasture; it corresponds to those people who learn and understand what they learn. Just as plants are not the same as water, but the latter is the cause for their growth, so is understanding not knowledge, but that which causes it. The second kind of land retains water, but produces no pasture. It corresponds to those who retain knowledge without understanding it. Therefore, whenever you see a scholar who adds nothing to what he has learned, know that he is of the latter kind. But when you see him adding to what he has heard that which is consonant with it, know that he is of the first kind. The third kind of land neither retains water, nor produces pasture; it corresponds to those who neither retain knowledge, nor understand it. To give knowledge to such people is to waste it, for

just as the owner of such land refrains from watering it, considering it a waste, so is knowledge not to be given to those who would only waste it.

*Lands are of three kinds: A land which when irrigated produces grass and pasture; it corresponds to those people who learn and understand what they learn. Just as plants are not the same as water, but the latter is the cause for their growth, so is understanding not knowledge, but that which causes it. The second kind of land retains water, but produces no pasture. It corresponds to those who retain knowledge without understanding it. Therefore, whenever you see a scholar who adds nothing to what he has learned, know that he is of the latter kind. But when you see him adding to what he has heard that which is consonant with it, know that he is of the first kind. The third kind of land neither retains water, nor produces pasture; it corresponds to those who neither retain knowledge, nor understand it. To give knowledge to such people is to waste it, for just as the owner of such land refrains from watering it, considering it a waste, so is knowledge not to be given to those who would only waste it.*



[22] Claims are not to be established by words, but by the proof of acts and deeds.

*Claims are not to be established by words, but by the proof of acts and deeds, for only the effort needed to do them will separate the truthful from the liars. He whose behavior confirms his words is truthful, but he whose behavior disproves his words is a false pretender.*



[23] When your soul claims that the presence or absence of a certain thing is equal to it, do not accept its claim without testing it with both situations. Were it not that signs exist, each would have claimed for himself that which is not his. But by signs and proofs are the veracious distinguished from the liars.

*When your soul, that claims perfection, claims that the presence or absence of a*

*certain worldly thing is equal to it, being so reliant on God, so detached, or so knowledgeable of its Lord, do not accept its claim without testing it with both situations*, in both the presence and absence of that thing. If the state of the soul remains the same in both situations, it is therefore truthful, if not it is false. The spiritual station where both claims are beheld equal in one's soul is a difficult one, attained to only by the perfect among gnostics; everyone else who might make similar claims is a false pretender.

*Were it not that signs exist*, indicating truthfulness in the truthful and falsity in the false, *each would have claimed for himself of perfection that which is not his*. Then the true and the false would have been indistinguishable. *But by signs and proofs are the veracious distinguished from the liars*. People are of two kinds, those whose reliance upon their Lord is sound and from whose hearts the love of this world has departed—equal to them is its presence or absence. The other kind is those whose reliance on God is unsound and who still harbor love for the world in their hearts. They are thus joyous when it comes and aggrieved when it departs, in proportion to the deficiency of their reliance upon God and the strength of their love for it.



[24] Those whose Afterlife needs are rendered easy to fulfill and whose worldly needs are difficult, they are among the Prophets' heirs. Those whose needs, both of the Afterlife and of this world, are easily fulfilled are counted among the Companions of the Right Hand. Those whose worldly needs come easily but whose Afterlife needs are difficult are counted among those who are being lured. And those who have difficulty fulfilling their needs in both this world and the Next, they are those who are loathed.

*Those whose Afterlife needs are rendered easy to fulfill*, for whom God renders easy obedience to Him, avoiding His prohibitions, striving to please Him, and staying away from what displeases Him, *and whose worldly needs are difficult to fulfill* so that they are able to fulfill only a few of them, yet remain contented with the decisions of their Lord, *tare among the Prophets' heirs*, from whom God drives away this world and its requirements, so vile is it

in His sight and so honorable are they, for them He renders easy the needs of the Afterlife, so worthy is it in His sight, and so lofty are they.

*Those whose needs, both of the Afterlife and of this world, are easily fulfilled, and who do not disobey God in fulfilling their worldly needs, are counted among the Companions of the Right Hand for whom God gathers the needs of both this world and the Next, but whose degree is below that of Prophets in proportion to their fulfillment of their worldly needs; for to take something from this world diminishes one's share in the Next World proportionately.*

*And those whose worldly needs come easily but whose Afterlife needs are difficult are counted among those who are being lured, whom God ﷻ drives towards His afflictions by means of His favors, then seizes them from whence they never expected. Therefore, let no person of reason be deluded by the ease with which worldly things come to him, for God gives them to those He loves and those He does not love, whereas He only gives piety to those He loves.*

*And those who have difficulty fulfilling their needs of both this world and the Next, they are those who are loathed and hateful to God ﷻ; they are for whom He joins affliction in this world to torment in the Afterlife, so they enjoy the pleasures of neither, but on the contrary suffer the severest of torments in both.*



[25] The worst among the poor are those who wish they were rich, while the best among the rich are those who would not mind being poor.

*The worst among the poor are those who wish they were rich. They wish they were like those whom God ﷻ is testing with the filth of this world and who are seldom safe from its worries and annoyances. Their likeness is that of a person who is ritually clean but insists on becoming impure. They may very well be resurrected in the company [of the rich], for he who loves certain people will be with them. This is the state of the majority of poor people who are not content with their poverty. While the best among the rich are those who would not mind being poor. The poor in question here are those who their Lord purifies from the filth of this world and frees to devote themselves to His worship. In the company of the purified poor, the rich people mentioned here are likely to be resurrected for the same reason*

stated above. Had the poor been aware of the merit of their poverty they would have increased in love and gratitude to their Creator and would have rejoiced. Had the rich been aware of the evil consequences of their wealth, they would have fled from it as wild donkeys flee from a lion. However, most people are only aware of some external aspects of this world, and are unaware of the realities of things.



[26] Those who refrain from unnecessary pleasures yet do not spend the excess of their wealth are but deprived. Those who enjoy what they possess and spend it on licit pleasures are better off.

*Those who refrain from unnecessary pleasures, being too miserly to spend of their money, yet do not spend the excess of their wealth in ways pleasing to the Lord of Beauty and Majesty, are but deprived of both the pleasures of this world that those with egos and bellies seek, as well as the merits of the Hereafter that those drawn near to God seek, so that they come under His ﷻ saying, "Neither belonging to these nor to those."<sup>164</sup> They are the worshippers of this world, its lovers who enjoy amassing it. Those who enjoy what they possess, eat, drink, dress, marry, and live well, and spend their wealth on licit pleasures are better off, for they enjoy their world, while still being servants to their appetites. As for those who spend their money on forbidden pleasures, they are the worst, for they use God's favors to disobey Him ﷻ thereby attracting His wrath.*



[27] He who summons to the Lord of the worlds cannot have his state perfected for him until his words and deeds become a yardstick against which all other believers can be taken to task.

*He who summons to the Lord of the Worlds, and is therefore heir to the Prophets whom God ﷻ has sent to the people to call them to Himself, cannot have his state perfected for him until his words and deeds become a yardstick against which all other believers can be taken to task, by being firmly steeped in the*

sciences necessary for calling to God ﷺ complete in both outward and inward emulation of the Prophets—may peace be upon them—his words conforming to his deeds, and his deeds confirming to his words. Such a person is one from whom God's servants are able to benefit, on whose behalf all who are in the heavens and earth ask forgiveness, and who is the true deputy of the Divine Envoys.



[28] When you see a scholar benefiting others by his words but not by his behavior, know that he is imperfect. When you see the student benefiting from words but not being educated by the behavior he observes, know that he is shying away from learning. When you see a disciple benefiting from the words of the master but not his behavior, then observe: if you notice nothing beneficial in the master's behavior, then this is of no consequence. But if you observe his behavior to be profitable and it is the disciple who is incapable of profiting from it, then don't acknowledge him as a real disciple.

*When you see a scholar benefiting others by his words when he speaks in conformity with the Divine Law, but not by his behavior, because he does the opposite of what he says or simply does not do what he says, know that he is imperfect and comes under His ﷺ saying, "Like a donkey carrying a burden,"<sup>165</sup> and is reprimanded by His ﷺ saying, "Will you enjoin benevolence upon the people but forget your own selves?"<sup>166</sup> and, "Why do you say one thing and do another?"<sup>167</sup> This is the state of the majority of scholars. When you see the student benefiting from the words he hears but not being educated by the behavior he observes, both of which come from those who call to God ﷺ with their words and deeds, know that he is shying away from learning, turning back on his heels, unlikely to learn anything of any consequence. The complete student benefits from words and is educated by deeds. When you see a disciple who should be learning the path to the King of Kings benefiting from the words of the master but not his behavior, which he is not emulating, then observe: if you notice nothing beneficial in the master's behavior, it being not in accordance with the Divine Law, then this master*



*is worthless* as much as concerns the Path of God ﷺ. On the contrary, the harm he does by his deeds being irregular exceeds the good he does with his words. *But if you observe his behavior to be profitable*, by conforming to the Divine Law and being done with complete piety and sincerity, *and it is the disciple who is incapable of profiting from it*, because he is unqualified to do so, *then don't acknowledge him as a real disciple*, for nothing good will come from him. The astute student benefits from his teacher's behavior as much as he benefits from his words, or even more so.



[29] When someone likes good things attributed to him that are not his and dislikes the evil in him to be made mention of, know that he is a hypocrite.

*When someone likes good things attributed to him that are not his*, even though this is extremely dangerous for him, *and dislikes the evil in him to be made mention of*, even though it will help him purify his soul from its filth, *know that he is a hypocrite*, for not only do the truthful dislike having something good attributed to them that is not really theirs, they do not even like to be described by their actual good qualities, in the knowledge that this might lead to a soul that incites to evil, destroying them with its arrogance and selfishness. On the other hand, they should like that evil which is actually in them be ascribed to them in the knowledge that this might help break the soul's pride and lead to purification from its blemishes.



[30] Praiseworthy modesty is often confused with blameworthy cowardice. The distinction between the two is that wherever shyness causes you to abandon an act of goodness or fall into an evil act, then that is blameworthy cowardice, not true modesty, for nothing but good can result from the latter, as says the *ḥadīth*.

*Praiseworthy modesty*, which is a desirable quality in religion, *is often confused* by those who are ignorant of the difference between it and *blameworthy cowardice*. *The distinction between the two is that wherever shyness causes you*

*to abandon an act of goodness, such as seeking knowledge, or fall into an evil act, such as leaving off enjoining good or forbidding evil, then this is blame-worthy cowardice, not true modesty, for nothing but good can result from the latter, as says the hadith.* This is because praiseworthy modesty is modesty before God ﷻ in the situations which please Him. He whose modesty is before God ﷻ will neither neglect doing good nor avoiding evil because of this modesty. On the contrary, his modesty before his Lord prevents him from being seen in places where He dislikes him to be or committing that which He disapproves of.



[31] He who abandons veracity when afraid of something will also lie when desirous of obtaining some other thing.

*He who abandons veracity of speech when afraid of something, if he speaks the truth, will also lie when desirous of obtaining some other thing, which is religiously reprehensible, for God ﷻ says, "Be with the veracious."<sup>168</sup> One should therefore remain strictly truthful whether he fears or hopes to gain something, and strictly avoid lying, unless driven by a dire need, such as bringing on a great benefit or avoiding a great evil.*



[32] The one who sees the world using only the eyes in his head sees illusions and forgeries, while the one who regards it with the eyes of his heart sees [nothing but] scattered dust.<sup>169</sup>

*The one who sees the world, the outward appearance of which consists in lovely things, while the inward is a rotting carcass, using only the eyes in his head which are able to see only the outward appearance of things, sees illusions and forgeries that attracts onlookers, deprives them of their reason with its love, making them passionate lovers. By contrast, the one who regards it with the eyes of his heart which see the reality of things, sees [nothing but] scattered dust that is useless, so that he flees from it in earnest and strives not to fall into its snares, become soiled by its filth, or dirtied by its impurities. Were its reality to be revealed to its lovers, those who have become deluded with*

its appearance, they would have been ashamed to come near to it, let alone pursue it vigorously and fall in love with it. Have you not heard what the most knowledgeable of those who know God ﷻ has said? He ﷻ said, "This world is worth less in the sight of God than a dead sheep."<sup>170</sup>



[33] Greed for money destroys one's religion. Greed for preeminence destroys both one's religion and one's money.

*Greed for money*, whereby one who amasses it, cares not whether he obtains it lawfully or unlawfully, in obedience or in sin, and neither fears God when acquiring it nor when spending it, inevitably *destroys one's religion*. What he will lose of his religion is far more profitable to him than the money he acquires; there is no good in wealth that destroys one's religion. However, the salve of money cares not whether his religion perishes so long as he acquires and preserves his money. *Greed for preeminence destroys both one's religion and one's money*, for it cannot be obtained otherwise. The real loser is he who loses both his religion and his preeminence. This is an affliction that has become general and few are those who escape its evil.



[34] The one who spends his wealth where it should not rightfully be (spent) is no less sinful than the one who withholds it when he should not.

*The one who spends his wealth where it should not rightfully be*, such as spending it on things that God ﷻ has forbidden, such as alcohol, illegal sex, and homosexuality, *is no less sinful than the one who withholds it when he should not rightfully do so* by not paying out his *zakāt* or supporting his dependents for whom he is responsible. He may be even more sinful than the former and deserving of a harsher punishment.



[35] The one who withholds money while aware that to have spent it would have been better is one who prefers this world [to the Hereafter].

*The one who withholds money while aware that to have spent it would have been better is one who prefers this world [to the Hereafter].* Those are they about whom God says, "Yet you prefer the life of this world, when the Hereafter is better and longer lasting."<sup>171</sup> They are the fools who will not give up an ant for a pearl, nor exchange the ephemeral for the eternal.



[36] Simply looking at those who prefer this world erases the love of the Hereafter from the heart. Consider then what would sitting and socializing with them do?

*Simply looking at those who prefer this world to the Hereafter erases the love of the Hereafter from the heart. Consider then what would sitting and socializing with them do?* That will surely be more harmful, the reason being that he who prefers this world to the Next is affected outwardly and inwardly by its problems and darkened by its shadows: these effects show outwardly to such an extent that to look at these worldly shadows will extinguish the love of the Hereafter from one's heart, and it will lead one toward loving and desiring them. This is something that is commonly seen. The company one keeps is sure to have an effect. This is why God said to His Prophet ﷺ "Extend not your gaze to that which We have given some of them to enjoy; the splendor of the life of this world, by means of which We will test them therein."<sup>172</sup>



[37] It is enough of an affliction to be lacking all desire for goodness. It is enough of a punishment to be humiliated by being a chaser after this world. It is enough of an injustice just that it be the fate of its perpetrator, and it is enough of a sin just that it be the disgrace of he who commits it.

*It is enough of an affliction to be lacking all desire for goodness, for goodness is the sign of felicity in both Abodes, as well as success in both worlds. There is no worse affliction, but only he perceives that who knows the worth of goodness, and how will a fool know the worth of things? It is enough of a punishment to be humiliated by being a chaser after the world. The world is meaner in the sight of God than a rotting carcass in the sight of people; those who chase it are like dogs, and those who desire it immerse themselves in humiliation and abasement. What worse punishment can there be than to be as contemptible as dogs. It is enough of an injustice against others just that it be the evil fate of its perpetrator, for injustice will be darkness on Resurrection Day; and it is enough of a sin just that it be the disgrace of he who commits it, for what disgrace is worse than to disobey the Lord of Grace and Revenge? Had the guilty been capable of feeling shame they would have died of their disgrace. Had sin no other punishment than to be reprimanded by the Mighty, it would have sufficed.*



[38] The one who abandons that which is well known for that which is imaginary is foolish. The one who remains in doubt when it is possible to attain to certainty is thoughtless.

*The one who abandons that which is well known, which is what God 𐌹 promised him of reward for his obedience, punishment for his disobedience, and his abandoning the Law, for that which is imaginary, such as money and similar things, is foolish for abandoning something the occurrence of which is certain, for something the occurrence of which is doubtful. The one who remains in doubt when it is possible to attain to certainty is thoughtless and will get nowhere. He may, for example, be undecided whether a particular thing is licit or illicit, while he is in possession of books of jurisprudence in which he could find the ruling for that matter were he to look into them, or he knows scholars who are capable of informing him were he to ask them, or he is capable of reaching a conclusion himself with a little reflection, and yet he does not.*



[39] A scholar must speak of only three subjects with ordinary believers. The first is for them to remember God's favors, the second that they adhere to obedience, and the third that they avoid sins. Any scholar who speaks with ordinary believers of that which does not fall under one of these three headings is nothing but an inciter of sedition.

*A scholar who knows about God ﷻ and His law must speak of only three subjects with ordinary believers, those who do not possess the same knowledge. The first is that they remember God's favors, the innumerable favors that the Generous One bestows upon them by His liberality. Thus they will nurture hope in His liberality, increase in love for Him, as well as in gratitude for His favors. The second is that they adhere to obedience so as to obtain the happiness of its reward, and the third that they avoid sins to protect themselves from their evil consequences. Remembering favors helps one to persist in obedience, which in turn helps one avoid sins. God ﷻ says, "The ritual prayers will indeed forbid lewdness."<sup>173</sup> Any scholar who speaks with ordinary believers who are not qualified to understand subtle matters of that which does not fall under one of these three headings is nothing but an inciter of sedition; one who tempts God's servants. How many an ordinary believer perished because of such things, falling into heresies, things akin to disbelief, reprehensible things, just because they were incapable of understanding correctly? This is why it is said, "Talk to people according to their understanding."*



[40] There is a [kind of mercy] that seeks you and there is another that you must seek. The one that seeks you is the mercy of guidance through clear explanations. For this purpose were Messengers sent and Books revealed. The one that is up to you to seek is the Garden. You strive for it by good actions in accordance with the dictates of profitable knowledge.

*There is a [kind of mercy] that seeks you and there is another that you must seek. The one that seeks you is the mercy of guidance through clear explanations.*

Guidance, which is God's mercy that He has willed to clarify things for His servants, seeks them and invites them to accept it and to do what will draw them nearer to God, and aid them in avoiding whatever drives them away from Him. *For this purpose were Messengers sent and Books revealed*, for He calls people to Him through them and conveys to them His guidance. *The one that is up to you to seek is the Garden. You strive for it by good actions in accordance with the dictates of profitable knowledge*, for good action is necessary to reach it, and he who desires it without working for it is a deluded impostor. He who does not sow does not reap. Such action must be in accordance with the dictates of the Divine Law, for anything that contravenes it will be rejected.



[41] There are three causes of greed for this world. The first is to regard it with the eye of approval, which leads to wishing to live long to enjoy it. The second is the respect that people accord to those who possess it, which leads to boastfulness and competition. The third is the illusion that it is indispensable, which leads to avarice and the fear of poverty.

*There are three causes of greed for this world. The first is to regard it with the eye of approval* that perceives it as lovely and desirable, *which leads to wishing to live long to enjoy it. The second is the respect that people who know no more than the outward appearance of things, accord to those who possess it*, mistaken in their belief that they have accomplished something exceedingly important, *which leads to boastfulness and competition* in wealth, their number of servants and followers, mansions, and other such things. *The third is the illusion that it is indispensable*, for they perceive that daily provision and other needs are dependent on it, *which leads to avarice and the fear of poverty*, both of which in turn lead to amassing and withholding the things of this world.



[42] The most ignorant of all ignorant persons is he whose knowledge of the immensity of God's mercy leads to more audacity in sin.

*The most ignorant of all ignorant persons about God ﷻ is he whose knowledge of the immensity of God's mercy leads to more audacity in sin. Does such a person not know that God is not only the Forgiving, but also the Coercer. He is not only the Compassionate, but also the Avenger? He has promised to punish those who disobey Him, and to recompense those who obey Him, for God's mercy is near only to those who excel in doing good. The most knowledgeable of all are those whom such knowledge increases their fear of God and care not to stumble into disobedience.*



[43] He who thinks about repenting from a sin before he has even committed it is led thereby to fall into it.

*He who thinks within his soul, which is attracted to sin and deceives a man by promising to repent, about repenting from a sin before he has even committed it, is led thereby to fall into it, claiming that he will purify himself from the filth of sin by subsequent repentance.*



[44] The one who commits a sin in order to then repent for it is like the one who soils his body and clothes just in order to wash them up. This is not how it should be. He should be as careful as possible not to soil them in the first place. However, if through unawareness or distraction he does soil them, he should clean himself up immediately.

*The one who commits a sin in order to then repent for it is like the one who soils his body and clothes with impurities just in order to wash them up, for just as material filth soils bodies and clothes and has to be purified with water or some other similar thing, so do sins soil the inwards as well as the hearts, and are purified by repentance. This is not how it should be, for this is not how sensible people should behave, rather this is the behavior of madmen. On the contrary, he should be as careful as possible not to soil them in the first place. However, if through unawareness or distraction he does soil them, as it is not the wont of believers to do so knowingly, he should clean himself up*



*immediately* by sincere repentance, which is to regret what one has done, give over immediately, intend never to relapse, and make amends for whatever needs to be made amends for and whenever it is possible. For a person to do so means that he will seldom suffer the evil consequences of a sin, but to delay repentance is yet another sin.



[45] Brotherhood in God is like a tree, watered by mutual visits, then producing mutual help in benevolence and *taqwā*. When the tree is left without water it withers, and when it fails to produce it is cut down.

*Brotherhood in God*, which is the best of brotherhoods, *is like a tree* that grows and remains moist with rain water. It is *watered by mutual visits* for the good pleasure of God, for He ﷻ has said, "My Love is assured for those who visit each other for My sake,"<sup>174</sup> *then producing mutual help in benevolence and God-Fearing*. Brotherhood in God is one of the most effective means of cooperating in benevolence by doing good works, and in God-fearing by avoiding sins. *When the tree is left without water it withers*, for it lives on water, *and when it fails to produce, it is cut down*, for it will have become useless except for its wood. So is brotherhood in God; when not watered with mutual visits it withers, and when it is does not produce as its fruit cooperation in benevolence and piety it must be cut down, for there is no good in brotherhood that does lead to drawing nearer to the good pleasure of the All-Merciful, and to distancing oneself from His wrath.



[46] When you perform an act of obedience, consider if you will it's beginning, namely that it was by God's ability, power and gracious assistance. In this manner may conceit be eliminated, and nothing remain but the acknowledgement of God's grace. Or consider, if you will, its consequence, which is an abundant reward and an excellent resting place. Thus will ardor increase and perseverance become a lighter burden. The first way of

these two is the more accomplished. When you commit a sin, beware of considering its beginning, which is predestination, that it may not lead you to raise objections to God the Exalted, for that would be far worse than a sin. On the contrary, you should look at its consequence, which is a painful chastisement and a severe torment. Thus will you hasten to repent and will increase in awe.

*When you perform an act of obedience, which will lead a fool and mindless person into self admiration, consider if you will it's beginning, namely that it was by God's ability, power and gracious assistance, for there is no other power or ability than His, and without His gracious assistance no work would have been rendered easy. In this manner may conceit, which destroys people and renders their works scattered dust, be eliminated and nothing remain but the acknowledgement of God's grace, for without His graceful bestowals upon His servants, who are in need of His favor, they would never have perceived a scent of the honor of devotional activity. Or consider, if you will, its consequence, which is an abundant reward, that which no eye has ever seen, no ear ever heard, no human heart ever imagined, and an excellent resting place in the proximity of the Generous, the Bestower. Thus will ardor for those acts of worship which God encourages His servants to perform increase, and perseverance in obedience become a lighter burden. The first way of these two, which is to perceive it as coming from God ﷻ is the more accomplished. When you commit a sin, beware of considering its beginning, which is predestination, that it may not lead you to raise objections to God the Exalted, for that would be far worse than a sin. This is what the disbelievers do, those whom God has expelled from His mercy. On the contrary, you should look at its consequence, which is a painful chastisement and a severe torment in the Fire, which has joined every kind of torment: flames, icy winds, scorpions, vipers, putrid water, bitter plants, among others, in addition to the wrath of the Compeller. Thus will you hasten to repent so as not to be overtaken by its evil consequences, and will increase in awe of the Coercer. Should the Devil try to tempt you into using predestination as an excuse, say, "My Lord is Just and He is not to be asked to account for what He does."*



[47] It is part of nobility of character to be humble when your rank is elevated, gracious in poverty, and frugal in wealthy circumstances.

*It is part of the nobility of character, which is the attribute of the people of perfection, to be humble when your rank is elevated, and joins knowledge with eminence and honor. Humility is excellent in itself, but more so in eminent people; its opposite is ugly in itself, though more so in lowly people. It is also part of the nobility of character to be gracious in poverty, always appearing well groomed and elegant, which is the utmost in gratitude, and frugal in wealthy circumstances, neither profligate nor miserly.*



[48] The man of intelligence who lacks knowledge is like a sensible man who lacks wealth, whereas the man of knowledge lacking in intelligence is like a wealthy man who lacks good sense.

*The man of intelligence who lacks religious knowledge is like a sensible man who lacks wealth, so that his good sense avails him little, since he lacks the means to exercise it effectively. Similarly, the intelligence of a man avails him little if he has no knowledge to guide him to what he should be doing. On the other hand, the man of knowledge who is lacking in intelligence is like a wealthy man who lacks good sense, so that he swiftly squanders his money and loses it. Similarly, the man of knowledge lacking in intelligence will squander his knowledge by placing it where it does not belong, such that it will often be the cause of his loss and perdition both in this world and the Next.*



[49] Put your intelligence at the disposal of your knowledge and your soul at the disposal of your intelligence.

*Put your intelligence, that was given to you by your Lord to distinguish you with from the animals, at the disposal of your knowledge, so that it trains it to do the right thing and prevents it from doing the wrong thing, and your soul, which incites to evil, at the disposal of your intelligence, so that it may*

control it and restrain it from doing wrong. He who does the opposite of that will have wasted both his knowledge and his intelligence.



[50] It is of no great consequence to be aware of one's inadequacy when one is inadequate, but rather to be aware of one's inadequacy when one is doing one's utmost.

*It is of no great consequence to be aware of one's inadequacy when one is inadequate and committing sin, for this is done by anyone endowed with reason, and is reproved by all virtuous people, but rather what is of great consequence is to be aware of one's inadequacy when one is doing one's utmost in the obedience of the Omnipotent, and to retain and the awareness that were you to perform the devotions of all created beings combined, they would still be worth nothing, for the rights of God are much more than that. You may even feel ashamed, for how would a lowly being like you ever be worthy of serving the Majestic?*



[51] Good is generally difficult in the here and now, but sweet later on. Like a man who is arduously climbing over an obstacle will only find rest once he has reached its summit. Evil on the other hand is generally sweet in the moment, but difficult later on. Like a man who is falling off a mountaintop or a house will only feel the pain once he crashes into the ground.

*Good is generally difficult in the here and now, but sweet later on. Like a man who is arduously climbing over an obstacle will only find rest once he has reached its summit, for only there will he experience blessings and great happiness. Evil on the other hand is generally sweet in the moment, for it is enjoyed by the ego, but difficult later on, when its consequences appear. Like a man who is falling off a mountaintop or a house will only feel the pain once he crashes into the ground. He who does good sees its merits only in Paradise, and he who does evil sees its consequences only in Hell.*



- [52] The brotherliness of a brother who will not help you when able to do so is no brotherliness at all.

*The brotherliness of a brother who will not help you when you need help in matters of religion or of worldly necessity when able to do so is no brotherliness at all. He is inadequate — there is no good in being his brother. What good is there in the brotherhood of a brother who will not help you?*



- [53] When you wish to select a certain person, there is no harm in testing him by that without which no valid selection could be made.

*When you wish to select a certain person, whether to take him as a friend, as a servant, or for any other purpose, there is no harm in testing him by that without which no valid selection could be made. For he who selects something before trying it out often regrets it. It is not astute to select someone whose state is unknown without first testing him.*



- [54] Keep only the company of those whose rights upon you; you are capable of fulfilling, and who fulfill your rights upon them so well that you never need request anything of them.

*Keep only the company of those whose rights upon you; you are capable of fulfilling, according to how capable you judge yourself to be and how easy to deal with are they, and who fulfill your rights, which become incumbent upon them once you keep their company, so well that you never need request anything of them. Do not keep the company of those who are not thus, for their friendship neither lasts, nor is ever free of dysfunction.*



[55] Those who neglect their brothers' rights upon them, trusting their excuses will be accepted, the least they will be led into is treating them with deceit and guile.

*Those who neglect their brothers' rights upon them*, which are either the special rights imposed by brotherhood or the general rights due to everyone, *trusting their excuses will be accepted* whenever they are neglectful, *the least they will be led into is treating them with deceit and guile*, which are the attributes of hypocrites. One should always strive to outstrip his brothers in fulfilling their rights, and if one happens to be inadvertently neglectful, one should immediately apologize and strive not to act as a hypocrite would.



[56] Treat your brother with no more graciousness than you are able to sustain, otherwise the result is sure to be estrangement and break-off of relations.

*Treat your brothers*, those in whose company you often are, *with no more graciousness than you are able to sustain* over time, being neither too enthusiastic nor too reserved, for the middle way is best, and no friendship will last in the presence of affectation; *otherwise the result is sure to be estrangement and break-off of relations*, which do happen.



[57] There are two kinds of interpretations. One that is a sign of perfection, which is to interpret something so that it might be understood. This kind abounds in the Book and *Sunna*. The second is a sign of imperfection, which is to interpret something in order to justify it as right and not wrong. A Shaykh who needs the second kind of interpretation when his company is kept is imperfect to follow, for such interpretation does not lead to perfection, but only to the treatment of imperfection.

*There are two kinds of interpretations* to problematic matters, *one that is a sign of perfection*, such as interpreting difficult utterances and other similar

things so that they might be understood. This kind abounds in the Book and Sunna. The second is a sign of imperfection in one who feels a need for this kind of interpretation, which is to interpret something in order to justify it as right and not wrong, for had he who needs such interpretation been perfect in his knowledge and expressions, he would never have said something that needs an interpretation to be made correct. This happens frequently with those who discourse on branches of knowledge in which they are not well steeped, and with those Sufis who express correct meanings, but in words that outwardly resemble disbelief. They thereby attract refutation and reprimand from those who really know God. *A Shaykh who needs the second kind of interpretation to justify his words and deeds when his company is kept*, because he does or says that which is in apparent contradiction to the Law and needs to be interpreted to look right, *is imperfect to follow, for such interpretation does not lead to perfection, but only to the treatment of imperfection*. People are of three kinds: those who know the interpretation of what they witness from the Shaykh, accept it, do not think ill of him, and are able to benefit from him; those who do not know, so that either they leave it without interpretation, believe what they witness it as it is, and thus go astray, where the harm they suffer from that becomes greater than the benefit they derive from him; Or those who leave it without any interpretation, do not believe the Shaykh has any rights upon them, and thus declare him a disbeliever, a heretic, or a corrupt man, all of which leads to much damage. The perfect Shaykh is he whose rectitude maintains him wholly within the boundaries of the Law in all his affairs and who neither does nor says anything that might lead people into temptation.



[58] He who loves any of this world's licit pleasures to excess is sure to fall into that which will bring upon him either shame or the flame.

*He who loves any of this world's licit pleasures to excess is sure to fall into that which will bring upon him either shame or the flame.* The Prophet ﷺ has said, *"He who grazes around the forbidden area risks straying into it."*<sup>75</sup> Pleasures attract and lead to each other, a pattern that one knows well by experience.



[59] An argument once broke out between Incapacity and Deprivation as to which of them was more deleterious. They pleaded their cases before Intellect. It ruled that Incapacity was fundamental, while Deprivation was no more than one of its branches.

*An argument once broke out between Incapacity, in the attainment of perfection, and Deprivation, of any possible benefits, with the tongue of their state, as to which of them was more deleterious. Incapacity said to Deprivation, "You are more deleterious." To which Deprivation replied, "On the contrary, you are more deleterious!" They pleaded their cases and clarified their positions before Intellect, who is aware of the reality of things as they truly are. It ruled that Incapacity was fundamental and at the root of deprivation, for without the first the second would never exist, while Deprivation was no more than one of its branches and dependent on it. Thus he who is afflicted with the incapacity to reach the high degrees of things, for him are tidings of deprivation of their benefits.*



[60] Every inward conceals something.

*Every inward—and the inward of a human being is his heart—conceals something. Some people harbor in their hearts good attributes that attract success to themselves in both this world and the Next; the effects of which often show outwardly. Others harbor in their hearts evil attributes that attract loss in both worlds; the effects of which often show in their external appearance.*



[61] Satan is much more intent on leading a scholar astray than an ignorant man, for a scholar led astray will lead others the same way, not so the ignorant man.

*Satan, being by his very nature the enemy of man, is much more intent on*



*leading a scholar than an ignorant man astray, since the first is capable of guiding others. Thus a scholar led astray, away from the straight path, will lead others the same way, since they are prone to follow him. A scholar is like the guide of a caravan that advances through difficult tracks which resemble one another and trails that bifurcate; when he knows his way, the caravan keeps to the correct route, when he strays, it strays with him; not so the ignorant man, for he is like the lonely traveler, who when he strays, he strays alone.*



[62] He who purifies his intentions reaches his goal.

*He who purifies his intentions from the tarnish of corruption and ostentation reaches his goal, the goal of his desires; while he who leaves them uncleaned does not.*



[63] It is difficult for a man whose heart is overcome with passion for wealth and preeminence to follow the road to salvation.

Following the road to salvation by striving to do what pleases the Lord of all existence and avoiding whatever displeases Him *is difficult for a man whose heart*, which is the center of the body, and upon which depends its health or sickness, *is overcome with passion for wealth*, which often drives its possessor off the correct path, as well as (the path to) eminence. Both constitute heavy shackles around the ankles of their people, often preventing them from taking the path to salvation and driving them to perdition. He who wishes to take the road to salvation should liberate himself of them and cast them behind his back. How many a person is thus shackled, prevented from traveling toward the King of Kings, and driven into abasement? He is in reality their slave. Let no person endowed with reason be deluded by the outward appearances [of those passions], for they contain mortal poison.



[64] Fear, when sincere, destroys selfish passions and lowly desires just as fire destroys trees. God ﷻ says, "*It was struck by a hot wind containing fire and was consumed.*"<sup>176</sup> Hope, when sincere, works to produce good intentions and good deeds, like water when it works upon still barren land. God ﷻ says, "*You see the earth still, then when We send down water upon it quivers and swells and grows pleasing plants of every kind.*"<sup>177</sup>

*Fear* of the Invincible, who casts all those He is angry with into pits of fire and does not care, *when sincere, destroys selfish passions*, which cause one to slip into lapses, offenses, and sins, all of which deserve severe punishment, *as well as lowly desires*, that attract one to vile things, *just as fire destroys dry trees*. Fear is the fire of God with which one burns up that which leads to His wrath and punishment, and purifies oneself from the filth of sins. God ﷻ gives us as an example a garden, and He says, "*It was struck by a hot wind containing fire and was consumed.*"<sup>178</sup> *Hope, when sincere*, thereby leading to expending effort in acts of obedience and avoiding disobedience, *works to produce good intentions*, which are the roots of works and upon which the acceptance or rejection of the latter depend, *and good deeds*, which are the products of good intentions, *like water when it works upon still barren land* that is dry and produces no plants. God ﷻ says, "*You see the earth still,*" which means dead without vegetation, "*then when We send down water upon it it quivers and swells and grows pleasing plants of every kind.*"<sup>179</sup> The conclusion is that with sincere fear are the trees of sins cut down, and with sincere hope do the plants of good works grow. This is how one reaches the degrees of Paradise and escapes the abyss of the Fire and obtains the satisfaction of the Lord of all creatures, which is the ultimate desire.



[65] You must light a lamp of useful knowledge and good actions to illuminate the darkness of the night of this world, until arises the dawn of death, or the sun of the Hour. Should you remain in that night without a lamp, awaiting the break of that dawn or the shining of that sun, then His ﷻ warning will be fulfilled in you: *He who*

*is blind in this world will be, in the Hereafter, even blinder  
and farther astray.*<sup>180</sup>

*You must, O seeker of goodness, light a lamp of useful knowledge, which is the knowledge of what draws you nearer to the satisfaction of the Real and what attracts His wrath, and good actions, according to the dictates of beneficial knowledge, for each has its lights, to illuminate the darkness of the night of this world, which is layer upon layer of shadow, for there you can only travel by the light of useful knowledge and good works, until arises the dawn of death, which dispels the shadows of this world, or the sun of the Hour. Should you remain in that night, that of this world, without a lamp, such as that mentioned above, awaiting the break of that dawn or the shining of that sun, then His warning ☞ will be fulfilled in you, "He who is blind in this world" and thus unable to see that which will guide him, "will be in the Hereafter even blinder and farther astray."*<sup>181</sup> Implying that he who is able to see in this world will see even better and be better guided in the Next.



[66] To escape the Fire is sufficient as recompense and  
to be deprived of the Garden is sufficient as punishment.

*To escape the Fire, which gathers together everything that pertains to the wrath of God the Invincible and is full of the worst of punishments and most repulsive filth, is sufficient as recompense for one's good works, for what recompense is better than to escape this calamity? To be deprived of the Garden, which joins beholding the All-Merciful and the satisfaction of the Benefactor to the highest kinds of favors, the loftiest degrees of liberality, mansions and *huris* and servants, and all else that is in Paradise, is sufficient as punishment.*



[67] The whole world is vanishing, for  
in reality it was never anything.

*The whole world is vanishing, little by little, it not being eternal, for in reality, compared with the existence of the Real and His immensity, it was never anything, for its existence or non-existence are equal.*



[68] It is part of your Lord's mercy to you  
that He veils Himself from you.

*It is part of your Lord's mercy to you that He veils Himself from you with outward appearances and other-than-Him, for were He to unveil Himself to you before you are prepared and qualified to witness Him, you would be annihilated and pulverized, or you would fall into that which is wrong. Have you not heard His saying ﷺ "When his Lord revealed Himself to the mountain He made it into dust and Moses fell down, unconscious."*<sup>181</sup>



[69] Excess in any matter is a sign  
that neglect is to follow.

*Excess in any matter is a sign that neglect is to follow.* It is rare to see someone pursue something to excess without eventually ending up neglecting it. The best of courses is the middle one and the best of works in the sight of God are those that are consistent even when few.



[70] He who, when pleased, praises you with that which  
is not yours will inevitably disparage you, when dis-  
pleased, with that which is not yours.

*Should I perceive aversion in a companion  
Never do I behave harshly even when he does  
But gently I withdraw while restraining  
my tongue from doing as he does*

*He who, when pleased with you because you have given him a gift, done him a favor, or praised him for some good physical or moral quality, praises you with that which is not yours, will inevitably disparage you, when displeased, with that which is not yours.* This is because he is the slave of his ego, praises whoever his ego is pleased with, and disparages whoever his ego is displeased with, his praise is thus to be disregarded.

*The Aphorisms*

*Should I perceive aversion in a companion  
I never behave harshly though he does,  
I will not return harshness with harshness,  
for such is not the wont of noble people.  
But gently I withdraw while restraining  
my tongue from criticizing as he does*

I will not slander him. This is what sensible people should do when they perceive this kind of thing in their companions, for it is the wont of noble people to be forgiving.



[71] The Remembrance of God is the magnet of the hearts which draws them away from the places of distraction and into the worlds of the Unseen.

*The Remembrance of God*, either with the heart or with a sincere tongue, using any formula, *is the magnet*; the rock which draws iron to itself by its specific quality of attraction *of the hearts*, which are the places of turbidity, shadows and remoteness from the Real, *which draws them away from the places of distraction and into the worlds of the Unseen*. This is because Remembrance [of God] has a light which persistently drives away the shadows in hearts darkened from attending to created beings and troubled by difficulties, until they become illuminated, and the realities of things as they really are become unveiled before them, such that they come to perceive those things that can only be perceived with the light of the heart. This is why he who persists in Remembrance continues to ascend until the hidden things become revealed to him, he sees the forms of the Angels and hears their speech, and understands the Remembrance of inanimate things and their speech.



[72] He should harbor no hopes of attaining to his wishes and desires who does not accustom himself to hardships and perils.

*He should harbor no hopes of attaining to his lofty wishes, which are the direct knowledge of his Lord and desires, which are the immense blessings of the Garden of Eden, who does not accustom himself, that is his ego, which is wont to flee the burden of acts of obedience, to hardships and perils, such as those suffered by people who aspire to the highest wishes and desires, which are not easy so that idle people will never embark on them, nor cheap so that bankrupt people might desire them, on the contrary, they are difficult things, the price of which is one's possessions, body, and spirit. He who desires them should expend of his money and his physical and mental abilities in exchange for them. Have you not heard His ﷻ saying, "God has bought from the believers both their lives and their wealth in exchange for the Garden."*<sup>183</sup>



[73] The intelligent man should never speak with an ignorant one who thinks himself intelligent; for if he speaks to him according to his own intelligence, he would be wasting and demeaning it, whereas if he speaks according to the other's ignorance, he would resemble him and be classed in the same category. God ﷻ said to His Prophet ﷺ, "hold to forgiveness, enjoin right conduct, and turn away from the ignorant."<sup>184</sup>

*The intelligent man should never speak with an ignorant one who thinks himself intelligent; for if he speaks to him according to his own intelligence, he would be wasting it, by using it with one who is unlikely to benefit from it, and demeaning it, since he whose intelligence is inadequate sees himself as intelligent, and regards actual intelligent people as stupid and thus humiliates them. Have you not seen how the disbelievers used to say to him ﷺ who was the most intelligent of all created beings, "you are but a madman."<sup>185</sup> On the other hand, if he speaks according to the other's ignorance, and according to his unintelligence, he would resemble him, since his speech would be at the same level of ignorance, and be classed in the same category, for the sensible person who behaves like an ignorant one is considered ignorant. God ﷻ said to His Prophet ﷺ, "hold to forgiveness," that is forgive the people,*

“command right conduct,” according to the Law, “and turn away from the ignorant” and do not treat them according to their ignorance.<sup>186</sup>



[74] He who pleases you with something that is religiously harmful, such as dissimulation, withholding advice, or failing to make you aware of your defects, is your enemy, even if your ego is inclined by nature to liking him. He is like a delicious kind of food that contains deadly poisons. On the other hand, he who displeases you, but with something that is religiously profitable, pointing out to you your faults and defects for instance, he is your ally, even if your natural inclination is to dislike him. He is like a bitter medicine, one that contains your cure and secures your wellbeing.

*He who pleases you with something that is religiously harmful, knowing that religion is the most precious thing a Muslim has, dissimulation for instance, when you have committed some wrong, withholding advice, when he knows about your situation, or failing to make you aware of your defects, so that you might be able to correct yourself, knowing that the believer is like a mirror to the believer—and does not dissimulate his criticism when something wrong is committed, on the contrary he will counsel him to desist, in compassion for him, and he will counsel him by clarifying the situation he perceives in order to help him avoid what should be avoided, and will point out his defects to him so that he is able to purify himself of their filth before he is made to suffer their consequences—he is your enemy, for had he been your friend he would have shown you what was good for you in this world and the Next and would not have cheated you, even if your ego, that pretends it is perfect, is inclined by nature to liking him, for it likes those who pretend it has no defects and is perfect. He is, in the harm he does, like a delicious, and thus desirable, kind of food, which contains deadly poisons. On the other hand, he who displeases you, but with something that is religiously profitable, pointing out to you your faults and defects, for who can be free of these? Should one who pretends to be pure search for them he is sure to find innumerable ones, one who elucidates your faults to you is your ally, so listen to him,*

accept his advice, and do not treat him with hostility as stupid people do, *even if your natural inclination is to dislike him*, for humans are by nature inclined to loathe those who point out their defects to them. *He is like a bitter medicine, one that contains your cure and secures your wellbeing*. How strange is our stupidity? When someone points out to us the physical ailments that affect the health of our body we listen to him, accept what he says, take action to find a cure, accept the bitterness of the medicine, and thank the physician. But when someone points out to us the defects that do us religious harm, we hate him, do not listen to him, do not take action to rid ourselves of our blemishes, and do not accept the burden laid on us by those acts of obedience which are in fact the remedies for our inward illnesses. This is something that all intelligent people should wonder at.



[75] He who likes to be talked about and praised for his merits, knowing all the while that he is otherwise, and who dislikes to be criticized for that which he knows is effectively in him, so that he ends up being pleased with and inclined towards those who praise him, and displeased with and averse to those who criticize him, he has become immensely foolish and accomplished in stupidity.

*He who likes to be talked about and praised for his merits*, which is something pleasing to the ego, *knowing all the while that he is otherwise*, and everyone knows his actual state even though he may pretend otherwise, *and who dislikes to be criticized for that which he knows is effectively in him*, so that he ends up being pleased with and inclined towards those who praise him, even though he knows what they say is a lie, *and displeased with and averse to those who criticize him*, to the extent of making them his worst enemy, *he has become immensely foolish*, for he has abandoned what he knows well of himself for others' lies and deceit. He is like one who makes himself out to be rich after simply being told he is in possession of millions, when he knows he has none of that. *He is accomplished in stupidity*, since he hates the one who gives him good advice and seeks to reform him. This is the state of most of us.





[76] Faith is a tree firmly implanted in the soil of the heart. Beliefs and the knowledge based on them are the roots and trunk of that tree, while praiseworthy attributes and good works are its branches and twigs. Death and the temptations and intense suffering that accompany it are like a torrential flood assaulting the base of that tree, or a strong wind moving its branches, throwing it to and fro. If that noble tree is not exceedingly strong, well built, and firm, both in its roots and its branches, it is to be feared that it will be uprooted. This is why so many great saints have worried about an evil end and their hearts' swerving at the time of death. The dangers and mishaps that the roots of that tree are exposed to, which are the deviations, doubts, and disruption of the means to the Hereafter, are as the injuries which may affect tree roots in general, while blameworthy attributes and sins are as the accidents that may affect its branches and twigs. It is obvious that that which injures and weakens the roots is much more harmful to the tree than that which affects the branches. This is why heresies and doubts about the Last Day are formidable perils and much more injurious than transgressions and sins. We ask God for safety and to die upon Islam.

*Faith*, which comprises both inward and outward aspects, *is a tree*, the roots of which are *firmly implanted in the soil of the heart*, which is the ground where Divine gnosis and Lordly sciences grow. *Beliefs* that conform to reality, *and the knowledge based on them*, are the roots and trunk of that tree, while *praiseworthy attributes* such as generosity, liberality, forbearance, compassion, and *good works* such as ritual prayers, *zakāt*, and pilgrimage, are its branches and twigs, and make up its beauty and perfection, just as beliefs and knowledge make up its roots. *Death*, which is the time one departs from this ephemeral world to the Abode of immortality, *and the satanic temptations* that happen when the devil appears to the moribund person and

does his utmost to deprive him of his faith or make him fall into something wrong, *and the intense suffering that accompany it*, are said to be worse than a thousand cuts with the sword, *are like a torrential flood*, masses of hurtling water *assaulting the base of that tree*, eating away at its roots and weakening its stem, often pulling it down, *or a strong wind moving its branches* powerfully enough to affect its roots, *throwing it to and fro*, eventually bringing it down. *If that noble tree of faith*, noble because all nobilities depend on it, *is not exceedingly strong* in its beliefs, knowledge, and depth, *well built and firm, both in its roots and its branches*, *it is to be feared that it will be uprooted* when tested with temptations and tribulations. *This is why so many great saints*, who know what lesser ones do not, *have worried about an evil end*, for things are reckoned according to their conclusion, *and their hearts* that are prone to sway from side to side, *swerving at the time of death*. We ask God for steadfastness in upholding what pleases and satisfies Him. Conclusions depend on premises; therefore, he who is predestined in eternity for happiness will not have the tree of his faith uprooted when the temptations and tests afflict him at the time of death, while he who is predestined in eternity for wretchedness will see it uprooted by those same things. *The dangers to one's religion, and the mishaps likely to weaken it, that the roots of that tree*, which are beliefs, *are exposed to, which are the deviations in belief*, which means believing that falsehood is the truth because of something having aroused confusion about the latter, *doubts about true things, and disruption of the means to the hereafter, are as the injuries which may affect tree roots in general*, lead to weakening it, and eventually bringing it down. These latter harms are more dangerous than what affects the branches, *while blameworthy attributes*, such as resentful envy, rancor, enmity, and arrogance, as well as *sins* such as adultery, consuming alcohol, usury, and bribery, *are as the accidents that may affect its branches and twigs*, weakening it. *It is obvious that that which injures and weakens the roots is much more harmful to the tree than that which affects the branches*, even though they are all deleterious, for that which affects the roots destroys the whole of it, whereas that which affects the branches destroys only its beauty. *This is why heresies*, which are deviations in beliefs, *and doubts about the Last Day, are formidable perils and much more injurious than transgressions and sins*, for they uproot the tree of faith completely, whereas sins only cause diminution in the beauty of its appearance. *We ask God*, under Whose power is everything, *for safety from*

every accident that may affect the tree of faith *and to die upon Islam. Amin,*  
O Most Merciful!



[77] The world, through its states, silently addresses those who long for it, saying, "Beware of me, for I am a temptation! Take from me your provision for the Life to Come, obey God's orders to let go of me, heed the lesson of those who lived before you, both the ascetics and the pleasure seekers. See what they have done, the manner in which they have departed, and the outcome of that in the Hereafter, for the ascetic's endless delights, and for the avaricious endless regrets."

*This world*, the appearance of which is illusion and the reality of which is calamities and deception, *with the tongue of its condition*, the appearance of which is the opposite of its reality, *silently addresses those who long for it*, those who passionately love and pursue it, *saying*, "Beware of me, O my lovers, *for I am a temptation!*" I tempt people away from the rightly guided path and lead them into abysses and lethal traps. Do not be deluded by my appearance, for I resemble well-cooked delicious food within which is mortal poison. "Take from me your provision for the Life to Come, expend of what I give you to obtain bliss therein, for I am the plantation of the Hereafter, but never allow me to distract you from remembering it; *obey God's orders to let go of me*, for my Lord has made me beloved to your hearts and attractive to your eyes, then tested you by forbidding you to take from me that which He dislikes or that which would distract you from Him, so that He may know whether you will obey Him or not. Therefore, obey your Lord in abandoning me, so that you may obtain the recompense for obeying Him, and do not obey your ego for it will lead you to perdition. *Heed the lesson of those who lived before you, both the ascetics* who recognized my villainy and were disdainful of me, *and the pleasure seekers*, who saw my appearance, were blind to my reality, and did their best to obtain me, thinking that to be the greatest gain. *See what they have done*, how the ascetics lived a life of decency, integrity, honor, and freedom from impurities, whereas [the pleasure seekers], my dogs, lived in abasement, soiled with my impurities,

and afflicted by my calamities. Those whom I leave, I cause to weep, and those whom I embrace, I taint. See *the manner in which they have departed, and the outcome of that in the Hereafter*, for the ascetics went away with the gains of a commerce that cannot lose, and honor that never perishes, while those who desired me went away with their losses, regrets, and remorse. ow lies their loathsome graves and their hateful mansions which they have left to others; *for the ascetics, endless delights, and for the avaricious, endless regrets.*" Yet only those hear its speech who are not blinded and deafened by their love for it, for love does indeed render lovers blind and deaf.



[78] Perfection has four components: Knowledge, by means of which are known the rights due to God; practicing that knowledge, which is submission to God's orders; sincerity in both the knowledge and its practice, which is to purify that which belongs to God; [finally], to renounce one's ability and power, which is reliance upon God. Thus, he who knows God's rights, obeys His commands, purifies that which belongs to Him, and commits himself to Him, he is the one who is agreeable to God, and His close friend.

*Perfection in religion has four components: Knowledge of God and His Law, by means of which are known the rights due to God ﷻ which are in turn incumbent upon His creatures and involve belief in Him and in His words, and conformity with what He commanded and what He forbade, these being the basic essentials; practicing that knowledge, which is submission to God's orders, outwardly and inwardly, in both action and refraining from action. Knowledge without works is like a tree without fruits; sincerity in both knowledge and its practice, so that the intention in both is entirely for the sake of God, which is to purify that which belongs to God from the impurities of associating other-than-Him in them, a thing upon which depends their acceptance or rejection; [Finally] to renounce one's ability to defend oneself against harm, and power to bring to oneself benefit, which is reliance upon God, to Whom alone belongs both power and ability. Thus, he who knows God's rights from the knowledge that He granted, either through His Messenger or*

by inspiration, *obeys His commands* by putting that knowledge into practice, *purifies* himself from intentions for other-than- Him, *that which belongs to Him, and commits himself to Him* in all his affairs, *he is the one who is agreeable to God*, and it is he whom God will please, *His close friend* whom He selects from among His servants. He who falls short in any of this, his perfection is diminished to the same extent.



[79] *Samāʿ* (audition) cures the sick and brings the decayed back to life, provided it is done by its people and for its people, at a time that is appropriate and in a place, that is suitable. However, it is a dangerous temptation for he who listens to it with the ears of his whims and passions, or performs it in that same vein.

(*Raḥmānī*) *Samāʿ* (audition), which is that which conforms to the Law of Muḥammad ﷺ not (*Shaytān*) *Samāʿ*, which is the lot of the deprived, *cures the sick* of heart, whose sickness is that of being veiled by creatures. *It brings the decayed*, whose hearts are dead, *back to life* by means of the rains of lights and secrets, *provided it is done by its people*, those qualified to be heard, for each utterance emerges clothed in the garment of the heart of the one who has spoken, *for its people*, from God and for the sake of God, *at a time that is appropriate*, for not every time is so, *and a place that is suitable*, for not every place is suitable. *However, it is a dangerous temptation for he who listens to it with the ears of his egoistic whims and satanic passions, or performs it in that same vein*, colored by his whims and passions. In our times, those who listen to audition do so with the whims of their ego and their satanic passions; few are those who perform or listen to it for God and from God ﷻ. How great are the deviations and temptations that the Devil has lured vile people into through audition!



[80] For a man to attain to the delights of the Hereafter, two things are necessary. The first is guidance and success from God. This is like the rain which falls on the land. The second is traveling to God steadfastly. This is like

plowing the land, and providing it with its requirements of seeds, attention, protection, removal of injurious things, and other similar things. To plow the land in the absence of rain is to toil in vain, whereas rainfall in the absence of plowing will only be wasted. Success that is granted by God, like the rain, is independent of the servant. This is reality [*ḥaqīqa*]. Striving and application, like plowing and caring for the land, are the servant's, they are his deeds, he will be interrogated about them and rewarded accordingly. That is the Law [*sharī'a*].

*For a man to attain to the delights of the Hereafter, two things are necessary. The first is guidance to the path of good and success in doing good works and refraining from evil, from God in Whose hand are both guidance and success. This is like the rain which falls on the land, and is necessary to quicken it after it had been dead. The second is traveling to God, who commands His servants to travel to Him, steadfastly holding onto the Muḥammadan pattern, without neglect or deviation in either principles or branches; and this is like plowing the land, which would not otherwise grow vegetation simply by receiving a rainfall, and providing it with its requirements of seeds, which is the origin of plants, attention, protection from harm, removal of injurious things that affect the plants, and other similar things which crops need to be able to grow. To plow the land in the absence of rain or any other alternative form of irrigation is to toil in vain, for nothing will grow without water, whereas rainfall in the absence of plowing will only be wasted, since nothing will grow without effort. Success and guidance granted by God are like the rain, independent of the servant. These are but the blessings of God which He grants to whomsoever He will and selects. This is reality [*ḥaqīqa*]. In reality everything is in God's hand and nothing in the servant's. Striving and application in everything that we have been enjoined to apply ourselves to, like plowing and caring for the land, are the servant's, they are his deeds. The explanation of this is that God puts in the heart a powerful will for good and for accepting correct beliefs and true knowledge, and a powerful will for avoiding evil and rejecting false beliefs and corrupt knowledge, and puts in his physical form the power to perform good things and shun evil ones, then imposed on him prescriptions that he is capable to endure. He who will use these powers according to God's guidance and success in that which*

pleases Him will have won, whereas he who fails to do so will have lost. The servant possesses a will in choosing to do or refrain from doing, and this is what he will be either recompensed or punished for, even though it is God who creates this will within him. *He will be interrogated about them on Resurrection Day and rewarded accordingly on the Day when each soul will be rewarded for what it has done. That is the Law [shari'a] the limits of which must be preserved and the rulings of which must be upheld.* Every reality that contradicts the Law is false, just as every law that contradicts reality is inoperative.



[81] This world is like a fearful desert teeming with robbers and brigands. The Hereafter is like a secure town in a fertile land. Man comes into this world to take from it and send ahead to the Hereafter. The intelligent man sends ahead all that happens to come his way in terms of worldly goods, that they may remain in safekeeping until, once he has reached his settling place in the Hereafter, he is able to make use of them. The ignorant man, on the contrary, keeps what he has until either it is taken away from him by the brigands, which are the world's afflictions, or he is forced to leave the desert, since it is not his settling place, and he thus abandons all his property behind, to be shared by those yet to depart. His is a telling example, so let those who are intelligent and sagacious understand. God ﷻ says, "*These are examples which We strike for the people, but only those who have knowledge will understand.*"<sup>187</sup>

*This world, which is the abode of calamities and tribulations, is like a frightening fearful desert teeming with robbers and brigands. The Hereafter is like a secure town free of robbers and brigands, in a fertile land. Man comes out of nothingness and into existence in this world to take whatever good deeds he can from it and send them ahead to the Hereafter. God ﷻ says, "What you have runs out but what God has remains."<sup>188</sup> He also says, "Whatever good you send ahead for yourselves you will find with God but better and*

of immense reward."<sup>189</sup> He also says, "A human being has only that which he has striven for."<sup>190</sup> *The intelligent man*, who is able to put first things first and place things where they belong, *sends ahead all that happens to come his way in terms of worldly goods*, and that he wishes to spare from destruction, *that they may remain in safekeeping*, and not perish, *until, once he has reached his settling place in the Hereafter*, when he will be most in need of these, *he is able to make use of them*. *The ignorant man*, whose priorities are unsound and who places things where they do not belong, *on the contrary, keeps what he has*, greedily holding onto it, *until either it is taken away from him by the brigands, which are the world's afflictions*, and he is left with nothing, for worldly afflictions destroy everything that can be a means to the good of the Hereafter, *or he is forced to leave the desert, since it is not his settling place, and he thus abandons all his property behind, to be shared by those yet to depart*. The likeness of this is death, which takes every mortal by the nape of the neck and drags him to a hole of darkness bereft of what he has amassed. The loser is he who amasses things for someone else's benefit, yet is still held to account for them. *His is a telling example, so let those who are intelligent and sagacious understand*, if they possess an intellect free of imperfections. God ﷻ says, "These are examples which We strike for the people, but only those who have knowledge will understand."<sup>191</sup> This implies that the foolish and the ignorant will not benefit from them.



[82] Fear never ceases and never leaves the believer, even when his faith is strong and his deeds good. On the contrary, the more perfect his faith and the better his deeds, the greater his fear. Its likeness is that of a man traveling in a fearful desert or a deep ocean, carrying much gold, silver, and fine cloth. Although he does possess wealth which will make him rich and honorable, he cannot depend on it yet, and worries about losing it. On the other hand, the one who has nothing fears nothing. It is only once he has reached port and certain safety that the owner of wealth loses his fear and is able to enjoy it. The hereafter is the safe port, the world is the deep ocean and fearful desert, the traveler is the man, the money



and fine cloth with him are the sciences relating to his faith and his good works, and the dangers he fears for his noble merchandise are doubts and other afflictions that might blight his faith and works and corrupt them.

We ask God for safety.

*The fear of God never ceases and never leaves the believer who believes that his Lord is the Sovereign who does what He will, which thing does not affect Him at all, and that matters count according to their outcome and their outcomes in turn depend on predestined decrees which created beings cannot know, even when his faith is strong and he is well established in certainty and gnosis, and his deeds good. On the contrary, the more perfect his faith and the better his deeds, the greater his fear, for fear results from knowledge. God ﷻ says, "It is but the learned who fear God."<sup>192</sup> Only he fears the Devil who is in possession of works that are like pearls and faith that is like diamonds. Its likeness is that of a man traveling on a fearful road or a deep ocean, carrying much gold, silver, and fine cloth and worried about them in proportion to their worth. Although he does possess wealth which will make him rich and honorable, he cannot depend on it yet and worries about losing it. On the other hand, the one who has nothing fears nothing, for no robbers will want to rob him. It is only once he has reached town and certain safety that the owner of wealth loses his fear and is able to enjoy it. This is the state of the believer; whose anxiety increases in proportion to his possessions of good works until after he dies and reaches safety. The hereafter is the safe port, the world is the deep ocean and fearful desert, the traveler is the man, the money and fine cloth with him are the sciences relating to his faith and his good works, and the dangers he fears for his honorable merchandise are doubts and other afflictions that might blight his faith and works and corrupt them. We ask God for safety.*



[83] The world keeps slipping away little  
by little until none of it remains.

*The world, which was created to be ephemeral, keeps slipping away little by little, like a candle that has been lit and is diminishing slowly, until none of it remains. Therefore, take from that which is ephemeral only that which will*

profit you in that which is eternal. Be not like those who have forgotten to take provision and thus found themselves destitute on the Appointed Day.



[84] The utterances of the truthful and sincere consist of light and blessings, even when ineloquent, while those of ostentatious and pretentious people consist of darkness and failure, even when eloquent.

*The utterances of the truthful and sincere with God consist of light that illuminate dark hearts, and blessings that profit those who are traveling to the King of Kings, even when ineloquent, and they are never keen to affect eloquence, while those of ostentatious and pretentious people consist of repulsive darkness and failure, even when eloquent, for every utterance is clothed in the garment of the heart of he who utters it. Compare the utterances of Prophets and Saints with those of the poets and eloquent orators!*



[85] He who lacks the insight to guide himself, his teachers and educators will have to toil long with him.

*He who lacks insight, which is the light of the heart, to guide himself, his teachers and educators will have to toil long with him, for he will be unable to profit from their guidance because of his lack of understanding, nor will he surrender himself sufficiently to them to be properly disciplined.*



[86] He who is arrogant before the truth and its people, God afflicts him with humiliation before falsehood and its people. He will thus have joined two afflictions to his two punishments, and will have missed two merits and two rewards.

*He who is arrogant before the truth, by believing He is not One and by associating others with Him, or by failing to comply with His commands and prohibitions, and its people, who are the Prophets—may peace be upon*

them—and their heirs who are the scholars and saints, so that he refuses to listen and submit to them, *God afflicts him with humiliation before falsehood and its people*. Do you not see how he who is too proud to concede Oneness to his Creator and to worship Him, He makes him the slave of His slaves and abases him by making him submit to the workings of disbelief and the devil. He who disobeys Him, He makes him ensnared by evil and enslaved by his ego and the devil. *He will thus have joined two afflictions*, that of arrogance with God and abasement before falsehood and its people, *to his two punishments*, that of humiliation before truth and its people, and also before falsehood and its people, *and missed two merits*, that of humility before God and His people, and that of pride in the face of falsehood and its people, *and two rewards*, the first of which is being lauded in this world and the second the recompense of the Hereafter; and God knows best.



[87] The believer is cursory in his worldly activities, but careful in his acts of worship, whereas the hypocrite is cursory in his acts of worship, but careful in his worldly activities.

*The believer* whose main interest is the Hereafter, *is cursory and brief in his worldly and ego-driven activities*, seeking only the strict necessities, *but careful in his acts of worship*, of which he never has enough so long as his soul remains in his body, being well aware of their benefits. *Whereas the hypocrite*, whose main interest is this world, *is cursory in his acts of worship*, for he feels them to be burdensome since he does not believe in their benefits, *but careful in his worldly activities* in his belief that they are his paradise and only source of pleasure.



[88] Those who are not wary of their own egos, both at the beginning of their acts and at the end, will be led by them into major afflictions.

*Those who are not wary of their own egos*, that incite to evil, *both at the beginning of their acts and at the end*, whether in doing something or refraining from

doing so, *will be led by them into major afflictions*. Therefore, one should be wary of the ego in every circumstance and never trust it in order to remain safe from its calamities.



[89] Some men are inviting others to follow their passions and appetites even as they claim to be inviting them to religion and the Law.

*Some men are inviting others to follow their passions and appetites even as they claim to be inviting them to religion and the Law.* This is the state of him who follows his passions and makes his religion subservient to them, until such point that he comes to perceive right as wrong and wrong as right, and then claims that only he is right who holds the same views.



[90] Knowledge is held against you until you practice what you know, only then will it be counted in your favor.

*Knowledge will be held as an argument against you until you practice what you know for the sake of God, and only then will it be counted in your favor.* Beware of ever pretending that it will benefit you without implementation. Also, those who are neglectful of action while being knowledgeable are not the same as those who are neglectful while being ignorant; both are inexcusable, however.



[91] Never did the blue-sky shade, nor the dusty earth carry, anyone more foolish than he who knows the excellence of a certain act, yet fails to do it, or sees the ugliness in a certain act, and yet does it nonetheless.

*Never did the blue-sky shade, nor the dusty earth carry, anyone more foolish than he who knows the excellence of a certain act, yet fails to do it, or sees the ugliness in a certain act, yet does it nonetheless.* This is the learned man who is well aware of the benefit in every act that draws him nearer to God, yet fails to

do it. and of every act that attracts His wrath and leads to one's deprivation of His reward, but he still does it. This is the state of most of us. We ask God for His forgiveness and pardon.



[92] Reflect, and then act. Think, and then speak.

*Reflect* well upon the thing you intend to do and are not sure of its consequences, *and then act* only when you see it to be correct, for he who does something without thinking of its consequences often regrets it. *Think* of what you are about to say, to distinguish between what is wise and what is not, *and then speak* once the wisdom of it is clear in your mind. How often does a person speak without thought and thus brings problems upon himself!



[93] It is sufficient honor for the people of the Hereafter that everyone, even those who are not of them, desire to be considered of them. And it is sufficient degradation for the people of this world that everyone dislikes to be said to belong to them, even those who are the foremost among them.

*It is sufficient honor* in this world *for the people of the Hereafter, that everyone who is a Muslim, even those who are not in reality of them, desire to be considered of them;* to enjoy the same respect that they do. *It is sufficient degradation for the people of this world—*who have made it their greatest desire and beyond which their knowledge stops short—*that everyone dislikes to be said to belong to them, so evidently vile they are, even those who are the foremost among them.*



[94] One of the gravest of major sins, whether inward or outward, is to seek worldly gains from those of your companions who seek only things of the Hereafter from you.

*One of the gravest of major sins, whether inward or outward, is to seek, either*

by word or by deed, *worldly gains*, for this world is accursed and belongs to the disbelievers, *from those of your companions* who gather around you to profit from you and *who seek only things of the Hereafter from you*. Again, this is the state of most of us. We ask God for His pardon!



[95] The worth of a person in the eyes of worldly people  
is equal to that which he takes from them.

*The worth of a person and his rank in the eyes of worldly people is equal to that which he takes from them. If he takes from them that which will draw them nearer to God, he will be honorable in their eyes, but if he is seen to desire their worldly goods, he will be lowly in their eyes.*



[96] Whenever you wish to seek a man's advice, imagine  
that he will advise you to do that which is contrary to  
your wishes. If you think you can comply, then seek his  
advice; otherwise refrain from doing so.

*Whenever you wish to seek a man's advice on something that concerns you, imagine that he will advise you to do that which is contrary to your wishes. If you think that, should he advise you to do that which is contrary to your wishes, you can comply, then seek his advice, for to consult with people of experience and wisdom is desirable; Otherwise, if you are unwilling to accept an opinion that is contrary to your wishes, refrain from doing so—from consulting him—for it will profit you nothing.*



[97] A man's opinion is the result of his knowledge and  
intelligence. Therefore, it should never be offered when  
unlikely to be heeded.

*A man's opinion is the result of his knowledge and intelligence. Therefore, it should never be offered when unlikely to be heeded. The likeness of one who gives his*

opinion to someone who will not accept it is that of he who hangs diamonds around the necks of pigs.



[98] He who will progress along the path will take possession, whereas he who deviates will perish.

*He who will progress along the path of goodness will eventually take possession of that which will give him joy, and will be protected from harm, whereas he who deviates from the path of right guidance to the path of evil will perish in the pits of temptation, and will be deprived of the salvation of right guidance.*



[99] He who stands guard on his heart will be protected from corruption, and he who stands guard on his limbs and senses will be safe from misfortunes.

*He who stands guard on his heart and protects it from everything that should not enter it will be protected from the corruption of all his affairs, and he who stands guard on his limbs and senses to protect them from everything they should not experience will be safe from misfortunes.*



[100] The intelligent man hardly has an enemy, whereas the fool hardly has a friend.

*The intelligent man, who attracts hearts to himself due to the perfection of his forbearance, tolerance, forgiveness, and reserve that holds him back from ever delving into that which he should not, hardly has an enemy, for being hostile towards no one, he rarely attracts hostility. Still, certain stupid people are often hostile to intelligent people, but that is due to their stupidity, not something the latter may have done. Whereas the fool, who offends others with his foolishness, hardly has a friend. The intelligent person is relieved of the stress of having enemies, while the fool is tormented by it.*



[101] In profitable voyages do both spirits and bodies  
find their repose, whereas in perilous voyages do both  
forms and secrets find hardship.

*In profitable voyages, which are those times enduring the difficulty of obedience, do both spirits and bodies find their repose, once they obtain their recompense; whereas in perilous voyages, which are times of committing sins, do both outward forms that will be tormented, as well as secrets that will suffer grief, find hardship.*







## *Commentator's Afterword*

What I have written in this work is not free of imperfections, partly due to flaws in the original manuscript, and partly because my understanding and judgment are not free of deficiency.

O God, we ask You for everything that You like and are pleased with, and we seek Your protection from everything that You dislike.

May blessings and peace be upon Your Beloved Muḥammad, his Family, Companions, and Community. *Āmin!*

May God be praised! We have completed reading this work and elucidating some of the more obscure points in the presence of our master the honorable Shaykh Ismā'īl ibn 'Abdallāh al-Naqshbandī in the mosque of the Messenger of God ﷺ.

He also said may God be pleased with him:

He who pretends that he is estranged in the presence of God and the people of God, give him the lie, for he is but a stranger in the company of his own ego and passions.

Today both the seeker and the Sought are veiled. The difference being that the sought's veil is made of light while the other's is made of darkness.

Should half of a person die today, the other half would still not take heed.

Today people understand sermons which speak about this world, but as for the Next, they pay little attention to it, so weak is their certainty.

People do not envy you for your religion, but only for your worldly possessions. Even when they envy the religious man, it is for worldly reasons.

The Qur'ān often likens this world to water, for a little of it is indispensable, whereas a lot of it drowns.

Today we do not dislike our companions to possess money sufficient to keep them free from want and independent of others, for the people of

this time are weak in certainty, and thus the rich fail to console the poor. Contrary to this blessed time of ours, our ancestors had complete certainty (or he might have said: faith), which helped them bear their hardships with patience, and the rich in that time used their money to console the poor.

Here ends what my Shaykh, Shaykh Ismā'il al-Naqshbandī, related to me of what he had heard from our master *Sayyid* 'Umar al-Bār, the successor of our master *al-Ḥabīb al-Sayyid* 'Abdallāh al-Haddād may God be pleased with them and spread their benefit.



## *Translator's Appendix 1*

Sexual intercourse is conceived of from three different perspectives. The usual legal manner states that since God created man with physical appetites, there cannot be anything wrong with gratifying any of them, as long as it is done within the legal limits set by the *Shari'a*. Such acts may even be raised from the status of what is merely permissible to that which is praiseworthy and deserving of Divine reward, if the proper intentions precede them. Should one intend, for example, before eating, to preserve his health to be able to worship his Lord, or to struggle for the cause of God, and then he or she eats without excess, observing the prescribed *Sunnas*, then eating is raised in this case to the level of a devotional activity. Similarly, when one's intention in getting married is to follow the *Sunna* of the Prophet ﷺ to gratify his sexual impulse in a lawful manner and thus obviate the temptation to resort to the illegal, to form an efficiently functioning Muslim family, which is the cornerstone of Islamic society, encourage his wife to be a good Muslim, raise his children in the manner most pleasing to God and His Messenger, and thus contribute to the stability of Muslim society and the preservation and propagation of Islam, then marriage becomes a most praiseworthy activity, deserving of Divine reward for each of these intentions. Let us not forget that the Prophet ﷺ did explicitly state that lawful sexual intercourse with one's wife attracts reward in the Hereafter, just as unlawful intercourse attracts punishment. He also said that every pleasing thing a husband says or does in the home, even feeding his wife with his own hand, is extremely pleasing to God.

The second view is the ascetic one, which is the one that has produced the aforementioned utterance of Imām 'Alī (see: The Conclusion of *Mutual Reminding*). The ascetic is a person who wishes to raise himself from the

bestial level of those over-involved with their physical appetites to the level of the Angels, who are entirely devoid of such appetites. The language used to shock people out of their slothful slumber is appropriately abrasive and may be crude. Thus, eating is said to be the activity of cattle, that is, it is disgusting, because it is followed by regurgitation, and blameworthy, because it leads to laziness. Sleep is said to be reprehensible insofar as it diverts time that should be spent remembering God, which is a function of the spirit, to rest which is an unworthy function of the body. Sexual intercourse is taken out of its total context, and is seen only as a gratification of a bestial appetite and preoccupation with other than God, Who alone should be attended to and loved.

The third and most comprehensive view is the spiritual one. The ascetic view is expedient as a transitory stage between the first and third stages. However, the Prophet ﷺ advised his Companions to cross this stage in a moderate, not an excessive manner. When told that Abu'l-Dardā' had abandoned food, sleep, and sleeping with his wife, he said to him, "*Your body has a right upon you and your family has a right upon you.*" Spiritual masters, including Sayyidunā 'Alī, attended to their families, enjoyed a warm emotional and physical relationship with their spouses; the only exceptions in rare circumstances when they were overcome by a powerful spiritual state, something normally only transitory. The spiritual view is one that allows human beings to perceive men and women as representing the two complementary poles of everything in the created universe. The even more profound and thus essential view is that they represent the two complementary groups of Divine Attributes, those of Majesty and those of Beauty. The physical union of male and female is thus symbolic of the union of opposites, which occurs only in the formless world of lights, perceptible only by spiritual contemplation, never by the physical eye or the rational mind. This is partly why the Prophet ﷺ stated that, of this world, only women and perfume had been made beloved to him, women being the symbol of Divine Beauty and perfume being the only non-bestial pleasure, the evidence for which is that it is the only pleasure of the physical world that the Angels enjoy.

Imām 'Alī's words must have been addressed to those who were or should have been in the ascetic transitional state between ordinary and spiritual beings. The Prophet ﷺ having said, "*Speak to each people according*

*to their understanding,"* no statement, even in the Qur'an and *Sunna*, except *lā ilāha illa'llāh*, should be understood in an unconditional manner. One should always look for the context of a statement, its limitations, and the possible exceptions to it.





## *Translator's Appendix 2*

### METHOD OF THE "COMPANIONS OF THE RIGHT HAND"

The Qur'an separates human beings into three categories:

*The Drawn Near*, who include the Prophets and the saints.

*The Companions of the Right Hand*, the right hand side being the direction of Paradise. The Companions of the Right Hand are those who are neither Prophets nor saints, but are still destined for Paradise. They range from the virtuous people, all the way to the most ordinary sinful believer.

*The Companions of the Left Hand*,<sup>193</sup> the left being the direction of Hell, are the disbelievers of all kinds.

Sufis have used this terminology to differentiate between those who actively pursue a spiritual path—they can be included with the Drawn Near, even though they may not have reached their spiritual degree—and those who have no such inclination, but are still believers, obeying most of God's injunctions, albeit with less sincerity and enthusiasm, and avoiding most of His prohibitions, albeit with not as much care as the travelers on the path. The former are included with the Companions of the Right Hand.

By the time of Imām al-Ḥaddād, the classical method of the Sufis, requiring total obedience from the disciple to the master, to facilitate his guiding him along the path, saving time and allowing for spiritual openings, had begun to become impractical. Rare had the disciples become who could endure such arduous training. Imām al-Ḥaddād started his life as a traveler on the classical path, then gradually changed over, as a Master, and formulated an easier method, more suitable for the End of Time. The one point that is still mentioned in this treatise that belongs to the old method is the question of surrendering all one's affairs to the Shaykh, which Imām



al-Ḥaddād himself, not much later, stated was no longer to be requested. Another reason for abrogating this requirement is that the masters who deserve to be obeyed in such a manner have grown fewer and fewer, until, in a time such as ours, especially in the West, they are almost non-existent.

In 1411 AH Ḥabib Aḥmad Mashhūr al-Ḥaddād — may God be pleased with him — attended a gathering on the occasion of the anniversary of the passing of Imām al-Ḥaddād. He confined his speech before the gathered company to explaining the method used since the days of the Imām, and which is still being practiced today. He mentioned the Masters of old, such as Shaykh ‘Abdal-Qādir al-Jilānī, Shaykh Aḥmad al-Rifā‘ī, and others, and said that their method imposed the obligation on the disciples to eat little, speak little, sleep little, and mix as little as possible with people. Then he remarked that even in those days, those who lived this pattern to the full were few and that the Masters’ requirement that the disciple surrender to them unconditionally had been difficult even then, and have become entirely impossible today, except in the rarest and most exceptional of circumstances. He spoke ironically of our times, in the same terms that his ancestor the Imām had done, calling them “these lovely blessed times,” implicitly acknowledging that they are times of generalized sedition, deception, absurd and downright destructive ideas and blameworthy innovations. He said that the Method of the People of the Right Hand is an easy method. It means that you perform whatever obligations and *Sunnas* God has prescribed for you; tread the path of *taqwā* as best as you can, and keep the company of good people and move along with them, for he who loves a people is counted one of them. When you behave as they do you become one of the Companions of the Right Hand, and you will join the people of *tariqā*. It is sufficient good for you that you just be one of them. “And whoever obeys God and the Messenger, they are with those whom God has favored, of the Prophets, the Siddiqūn, the martyrs, and the virtuous. And the best of companions are they!”<sup>94</sup> Then Ḥabib Aḥmad stated that much of the previous self-disciplining practices have been replaced with the constant Remembrance of God, recommending in particular the litanies of Imām al-Ḥaddād, specifically, *al-Wird al-Latīf* and *al-Rātīb*. Finally, he said a few words about *ijāza*, the permission or authorization to use these and other invocations, that is transmitted from one master to the next and from master to disciple, which renders the use of these invocations more fruitful.



## Endnotes

1. Bukhārī, *Sahih*, 6475.
2. Tirmidhī, *Sunan*, 2412.
3. Qur'an, 51:55.
4. Qur'an, 49: 1-3.
5. Part of a *ḥadith* in Bayhaqī, *al-Sunan al-Kubrā*, 20804.
6. Ibn Māja, *Sunan*, 224.
7. Qur'an, 2:32.
8. Qur'an, 4:131.
9. Qur'an, 4:1.
10. Qur'an, 33:70.
11. Qur'an, 3:102.
12. Qur'an, 64:16.
13. Qur'an, 65:7.
14. Qur'an, 65:2-3.
15. Qur'an, 2:2.
16. Qur'an, 2:282.
17. Qur'an, 8:29.
18. Qur'an, 45:19.
19. Qur'an, 2:194.
20. Qur'an, 19:72.
21. Qur'an, 13: 35; 47:15.
22. Qur'an, 68: 34.
23. Qur'an, 50:31.
24. Tirmidhī, *Sunan*, 1987.
25. Tirmidhī, *Sunan*, 2676.
26. Bukhārī, *Sahih*, 6023.
27. Muslim, *Sahih*, 2721.
28. Ṭabarānī, *Kabir*, 16.
29. Tirmidhī, *Sunan*, 3956.
30. Bukhārī, *Sahih*, 3353.
31. Ahmad, *Musnad*, 24400.
32. Qur'an, 26:88-89.
33. Qur'an, 53:31.
34. Qur'an, 53:39-42.
35. Qur'an, 4:23-24.
36. Qur'an, 99:7-8.
37. Qur'an, 2:286.
38. Qur'an, 41:46.
39. Qur'an, 3:30.
40. Qur'an, 2:281.
41. Bayhaqī, *Shu'ab al-Īmān*, 10057, 10058; al-Hākīm, *Mustadrak*, 7921.
42. Bayhaqī, *al-Zuhd al-Kabīr*, 710; Sakhāwī, *al-Maqāsid al-Hasana*, 834; Suyūṭī, *al-Jāmi' al-Saghir*, 6119.
43. Muslim, *Sahih*, 2577.
44. Hannād ibn al-Sariy, *al-Zuhd*, 2/559.
45. Ṭabarānī, *Kabīr*, 12804, *Saghir*, 1179.
46. Qur'an, 4:13-14.
47. Qur'an, 3:133.
48. Qur'an, 66:6.
49. Qur'an, 16:97.
50. Qur'an, 24:55.

51. Qur'an, 18:30-31.
52. Qur'an, 19:96.
53. Bukhārī, *Sahih*, 6502.
54. Bukhārī, *Sahih*, 7405.
55. Bukhārī, *Sahih*, 7498.
56. Qur'an, 44:57.
57. Qur'an, 37:61.
58. Qur'an, 20:74.
59. Qur'an, 29:4.
60. Qur'an, 33:36.
61. Bukhārī, *Sahih*, 6810.
62. Tirmidhī, *Sunan*, 3334. The Qur'anic verse quoted is 83:14.
63. Ibn Māja, *Sunan*, 4022.
64. Bazzār, *Musnad*, 3068; al-Hākim, *Mustadrak*, 35.
65. Bayhaqī, *Shu'ab al-Īmān*, 1580; Tirmidhī, *Sunan*, 2322.
66. This was said by Ibn 'Abbās. (Safūrī, *Nuzhat al-Majālis*, 2/60.)
67. Ahmad, *al-Zuhd*, 52; Bayhaqī, *Shu'ab al-Īmān*, 10045.
68. Bazzār, *Musnad*, 6442; Abū Nu'aym, *Hilyat al-Awliyā'*, 6/175.
69. Bazzār, *Musnad*, 7449.
70. Qur'an, 63:10.
71. Qur'an, 63:11.
72. Qur'an, 35:37.
73. Ibn Abī al-Dunyā, *Qisar al-Amal*, 6; Mundhirī, *al-Tarhib wa'l-Tarhib*, 5063.
74. Ahmad, *Musnad*, 2614.
75. Qur'an, 5:27.
76. This is part of a *hadith* in Muslim, *Sahih*, 1015, and several other compilations.
77. Tirmidhī, *Sunan*, 2322.
78. Qur'an, 51:56.
79. Qur'an, 29:56.
80. Safūrī, *Nuzhat al-Majālis*, 1/146.
81. Bazzār, *Musnad*, 7293; Tabarānī, *Awsat*, 5452.
82. Bayhaqī, *Shu'ab al-Īmān*, 10019.
83. Ibn Hibbān, *Sahih*, 3223; Tirmidhī, *Sunan*, 2336.
84. Daylamī, *al-Firdaws*, 5019.
85. Qur'an, 25:44.
86. Qur'an, 2:60.
87. Qur'an, 28:69.
88. Qur'an, 39:15.
89. Qur'an, 10:24.
90. Qur'an, 18:7-8.
91. Qur'an, 20:131
92. Qur'an, 42:20
93. Qur'an, 57:20
94. Qur'an, 79:37-39
95. Tirmidhī, *Sunan*, 2322.
96. Tirmidhī, *Sunan*, 2320.
97. Ahmad, *Musnad*, 15747; Bayhaqī, *Shu'ab al-Īmān*, 5266.
98. Tirmidhī, *Sunan*, 2323; Ibn Māja, *Sunan*, 4108.
99. Abū Ya'lā, *Musnad*, 3713.
100. Bayhaqī, *Shu'ab al-Īmān*, 9922; Ibn 'Asākir, *Tārikh Dimashq*, 66:203.
101. Tirmidhī, *Sunan*, 2191.
102. Bukhārī, *Sahih*, 4015.
103. Abū Nu'aym, *Al-Musnad al-Mustakhraj 'alā Sahih Muslim*, 2346; Ibn Hibbān, *Sahih*, 3225.
104. Muslim, *Sahih*, 2956.
105. Bayhaqī, *Shu'ab al-Īmān*, 9967.
106. Ibn Hibbān, *Sahih*, 709; Ahmad, *Musnad*, 19697, 19698.
107. Ahmad, *Musnad*, 22899; Bayhaqī, *Shu'ab al-Īmān*, 9853; al-Hākim, *Mustadrak*, 7861.
108. Bukhārī, *Sahih*, 6444.
109. Daylamī, *al-Firdaws*, 8875.

110. Bayhaqī, *Shu'ab al-Īmān*, 1378; Abū Nu'aym, *Hilyat al-Awliyā'*, 4: 234.
111. Tirmidhī, *Sunan*, 2346.
112. Tirmidhī, *Sunan*, 2333.
113. Ibn Māja, *Sunan*, 4102.
114. Ahmad, *Musnad*, 24419; Bayhaqī, *Shu'ab al-Īmān*, 10154.
115. Ibn Wad'ān al-Mawsilī, *al-Arba'in*, 38.
116. Bukhārī, *Sahih*, 2887.
117. Al-Shihāb al-Qudā'i, *Musnad*, 278.
118. Al-Hākīm, *Mustadrak*, 7863; Bayhaqī, *Shu'ab al-Īmān*, 10068.
119. Bayhaqī, *Shu'ab al-Īmān*, 10015; Daylamī, *al-Firdaws*, 7276.
120. Qur'an, 23:10.
121. Qur'an, 2:86.
122. Qur'an, 40:30.
123. Qur'an, 34:1-2.
124. Qur'an, 17:18-19.
125. Bukhārī, *Sahih*, 1.
126. Tabarānī, *Kabir*, 519; *Awsat*, 2856.
127. Tirmidhī, *Sunan*, 2412.
128. Tirmidhī, *Sunan*, 2380.
129. Haythamī, *Kashf al-Astār 'an Zawā'id al-Bazzār*, 552.
130. Daylamī, *al-Firdaws*, 2556.
131. Qur'an, 3: 200.
132. Qur'an, 7: 137.
133. Qur'an, 32: 24.
134. Rāzī, *Mafātih al-Ghayb*, 4/131; *Qūt al Qulūb*, 1/326; 2/33.
135. Qur'an, 43:33-35.
136. Muslim, *Sahih*, 2956.
137. Tirmidhī, *Sunan*, 2320.
138. Qur'an, 11:6.
139. Qur'an, 29:17.
140. Qur'an, 59: 7.
141. Qur'an, 33: 21.
142. Qur'an, 4: 80.
143. Qur'an, 3: 31.
144. Qur'an, 24: 63.
145. Qur'an, 2:32.
146. Qur'an, 21:87.
147. Bukhārī, *Sahih*, 7013.
148. Qur'an, 2:32.
149. Qur'an, 55: 29.
150. Qur'an, 3:101.
151. Qur'an, 41:46.
152. Qur'an, 40: 13.
153. Qur'an, 27:80.
154. Ibn Hibbān, *Sahih*, *Kitāb al-Zakāt*, *Dhikr al-ibāha li'l-rajul alladhī yajma' al-māl min hillih*, 3279; Ahmad, *Musnad*, 17096.
155. Qur'an, 2:60.
156. Qur'an, 64:15.
157. Tirmidhī, *Sunan*, 2322.
158. Qur'an, 3:159.
159. Qur'an, 9:73.
160. Qur'an, 25:43.
161. Qur'an, 7:179.
162. Qur'an, 59:9.
163. Muslim, *Sahih*, *Kitāb Al-Musāqāt*, *Bāb Akhdh al-halāl wa tark al-shubuhāt*, 2996.
164. Qur'an, 4:143.
165. Qur'an, 62:5.
166. Qur'an, 2:44.
167. Qur'an, 61:2.
168. Qur'an, 9:119.
169. Qur'an, 25: 23.
170. Ibn Māja, *Sunan*, 4100.
171. Qur'an, 87:16, 17.
172. Qur'an, 20:131.
173. Qur'an, 29:45.
174. Ahmad, *Musnad*, 18621, 20995, 21021;

*Three Treatises*

- |      |                               |      |                |
|------|-------------------------------|------|----------------|
| 175. | Tirmidhī, <i>Sunan</i> , 1205 | 185. | Qur'ān, 15:6.  |
| 176. | Qur'ān, 2:266.                | 186. | Qur'ān, 7:199. |
| 177. | Qur'ān, 22:5.                 | 187. | Qur'ān, 39:43. |
| 178. | Qur'ān, 2:266.                | 188. | Qur'ān, 16:96. |
| 179. | Qur'ān, 22:5.                 | 189. | Qur'ān, 73:20. |
| 180. | Qur'ān, 17:72.                | 190. | Qur'ān, 53:39. |
| 181. | Qur'ān, 7:72.                 | 191. | Qur'ān, 39:43. |
| 182. | Qur'ān, 7:143.                | 192. | Qur'ān, 35:28. |
| 183. | Qur'ān, 9:111.                | 193. | Qur'ān, 56.    |
| 184. | Qur'ān, 7:199.                | 194. | Qur'ān, 4:69.  |

